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No.2 NOVEMBER 1985 £1

AMSTRAD ACTION

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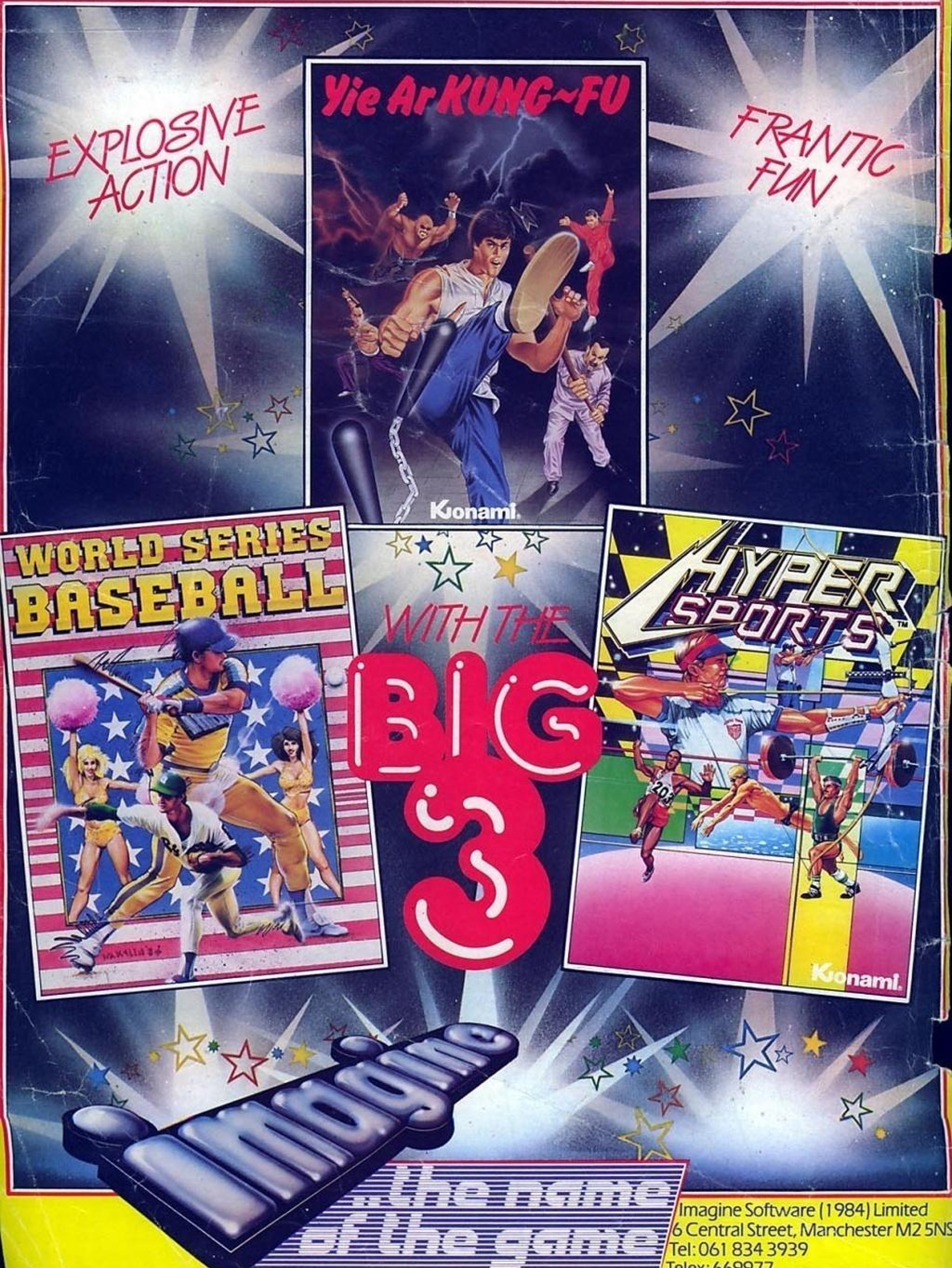
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THE LINE-UP

AMSTRAD ACTION NOVEMBER 1985

HOT REVIEWS

54 Highway Encounter. Stunningly smooth, fiendishly difficult, horribly compulsive.

38 Dragontorc. Maroc the Mage stars in the mystical arcade adventure.

38 Wizard's Lair. 256 screens of fast, tricky action for Pothole Pete as he tracks down the four pieces of the Golden Lion.

46 The Covenant. Space-bubble your way around PSS's huge and pretty arcade adventure.

52 Southern Belle. You really can hear the whistle blow in this steam-train simulation.

53 Bruce Lee. Brucie bounds on to the Arnold. Take that you nasty Yammo!

62 The Devil's Crown. Piracy on the high seas in this shipboard arcade adventure.

64 Matchday. Show off your soccer skills with Ocean's table-topper.

64 Raid! It's not over Moscow, but you can still have a pretty good zap, comrade.

72 Starion. Attain Creator status and impress your friends. Superb vector graphics.

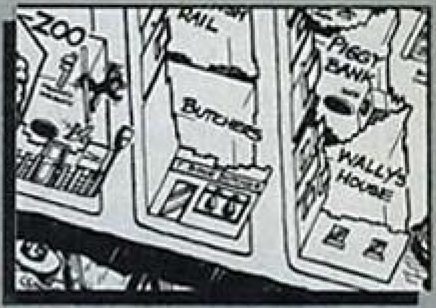
NOVEMBER SPECIALS

22 The Great Link-Up. Modems, Prestel, Bulletin boards. The communications revolution made simple.

16 PCW Picture Show. Sizzling snaps from the country's biggeest computer show.

32 PCW 8256 Review. Amstrad's latest machine investigated. Is Joyce a bargain?

92 Everyone's a Wally. The definitive map – in glorious AmstradActioncolor with 3D. No specs required.



JUICY OFFERS

101 Amazing Modem offer. Skywave Multi-port and modem for only £129.95.

87 Amsoft shocker. £600 worth of software to be won in ace comp.

102 Hewson twosome. Two raves up for grabs in incredibly difficult(?) competition.

85 Mail Order. Get your games on the cheap with our discount offer.

97 PSS double. 50 pairs of great games to be won.

95 Maps, pokes, tips. There's still £300 going for the best contributions to Cheat Mode.

104 Subscribe. Last chance to get in on this great AA offer – two FREE Ocean games.

ACTION REGULARS

8 Ed-Lines. Containing some very important announcements.

10 ReAction. Introducing Arnold's perkiest letters pages. The bit where you get YOUR say.

19 Amscene. All the latest news, including software on the way for Xmas.

27 Bizprogs. Superpower's Mailing List Rom scrutinised.

37 Action Test. Over 30 games reviewed. With new, added INDEX.

78 Adventures. The Pilgrim presents some pretty graphics and some nifty peeks and pokes.

88 Cheat Mode. The sneaky section presents bags of tips, pokes and maps.

98 High-Score. Readers' best efforts – plus, a chance to challenge.

100 Hot Stuff. Charts and special offer form.

BOUNTY BOB STRIKES BACK!

Twenty-five Levels.

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"Bounty Bob Strikes Back" is the sequel to "Miner 2049er" which was a huge success on the Commodore 64 and Atari machines. Now on the Amstrad, this version features Bob's toughest challenge to date and he needs your help more than ever before to guide him through the mine. The mutant organisms within have multiplied and over run the mine entirely, making it extremely difficult to survive the hazards of the underground passageways. Using high powered special equipment in the twenty-five caverns is Bob's only hope of achieving his objective of securing the mine and defeating the evil plans of Yukon Yohan.

BEACH-HEAD

Multiscreen 3-D Arcade Action

A peaceful island is being held by a ruthless dictator and his troops. As Chief Commander of land and sea forces in the Pacific, you must obtain a quick naval victory and then invade the island with land forces. If your troops succeed in penetrating the island defence systems, the most difficult challenge still remains; capturing the enemy fortress of Khun-Lin.

Beach-Head is a multiscreen action game which requires different skills and provides new sequences as you progress through the game.

AMMUNITION
BATTLE STATIONS

BRUCE LEE

Twenty secret chambers to explore

Unique multiple player options

Dazzling graphics and animation

In "Bruce Lee" you will experience the power and the glory of Bruce Lee, one of the greatest masters of the martial arts.

As Bruce Lee, you will confront a barrage of vicious foes. You must penetrate the fortress of the Evil Wizard and claim his fortunes. Destroying the Wizard will earn you immortality and infinite wealth!

THE BEST OF AMERICA..

U.S. GOLD ON THE AMSTRAD*- ONE

RAID!

Gripping Arcade Action

Multiple 3-D Scrolling Screens

The scene is one of World-wide conflict. The only hope of saving the World from nuclear annihilation is an attack by stealth bombers on the launch sites.

As squadron leader, you must lead your troops on a virtual suicide mission; knock-out the launch sites, and proceed to the command headquarters. Armed only with the weapons you carry, you must destroy the defence centre and stop the attack!

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IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

Game of the Year 1985-
British Micro Awards

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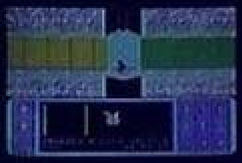
Somersault over the robots or use a precious snooze code to deactivate them long enough to search each room. Use the Agency's computer to unscramble the passwords from the code pieces, or try to solve them yourself. You'd better beware.....This mission is stamped IMPOSSIBLE!"



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Dear Readers,
I can say that now, because after our first issue I know we've got some. In fact, we've got thousands. There's been a great response to our pleas for letters and questionnaires – you obviously take your duties as readers and Amstrad owners very seriously indeed.

The most interesting thing was to find out what a varied bunch you are. Children, teenagers, adults, parents, grand-parents – we got replies from the lot. The Arnold must have the broadest spectrum (sorry) of owners in the country. You can see what you've got to say in the four pages of ReAction. Next month we hope to have even more of your letters, so keep them coming.

Lots of you returned the questionnaires and gave us invaluable information on what you wanted from Amstrad Action. Your wishes are our command, so you'll be seeing some changes in the next issue – most importantly, the inclusion of occasional type-in listings and readers' opinions on new software. See the separate boxes on this page for more details.

This second issue also sees the first of the Readers' Charts for games and serious software. Not too many surprises here, with a remarkable degree of consensus on what's the tops. Our first nationwide games sales chart is printed too, in Amscene. Action Test kicks off with an introductory page. There's an index of games reviewed and a detailed explanation of our ratings and reviewing system.

Elsewhere in the mag there are some particularly stunning games and some scrumptiously juicy offers – this is your last chance to take advantage of our introductory subscription offer featuring two Ocean games. Look out for the Mail Order service as well.

If you saw the first issue of the mag, then you'll notice that something's missing from this page (apart from some decent jokes). Photos of the AA Team have been cut, savagely and ruthlessly and without any regard for the feelings of the people involved. This is because we're more concerned with your feelings, which seem to have been shock, horror etc. on seeing our ugly mugs. Some of you were appalled by our relative youth, some by our revolting grins, some by a certain software editor's resemblance to characters in *Dallas*. Whatever the reasons, you didn't like the look of us, and I can't say I blame you. So no AA Team nasties this time – but we're showing you what the two new members of the team look like because they're much more presentable.

We think you'll find this issue a good read. We want to make it even better, so keep your letters flooding in.

Pete Connor

Game delays

Humble apologies to all those still waiting to receive tapes from us as part of our launch subscription offer. Three of the games on offer – Hypersports, Match Day and World Series Baseball weren't released when we expected them to be and as a result the despatch of huge numbers of waiting jiffy bags has had to be delayed. As we go to press, the release of Match Day and Baseball seems imminent, while Hypersports is expected out by mid-October. So hopefully if you're still waiting, you won't be much longer. You'll get the software just as soon as we can get our hands on it.

A similar delay has affected our despatch of the Beyond titles Shadowfire and Spy v Spy. In fact due to an unforseen development at Beyond, Shadowfire is not now expected to be out before 1986! People who ordered that game are being offered their money back rather than wait. Spy v Spy, however should be out by the time you read this.

Really sorry about the delays – we're sure you'll enjoy the software when it arrives.

Amstrad Action
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West Street
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Somerset TA11 7PS
Tel: 0458-74011
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EDITOR: **Peter Connor**
SOFTWARE EDITOR: **Bob Wade**
ART EDITOR: **Trevor Gilham**
PUBLISHER: **Chris Anderson**

ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER: **Alan Towler** (Tel. 01-221-3592)

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New Blood Part 1

In a desperate attempt to inject zest into an exhausted AA Team, two new members have been signed up.

George Murphy, 23, is the new and only Assistant Art Editor. Londoner George is a whiz with a scalpel and can also draw a pretty mean telephone – see this month's cover. George lives for his work, mainly because he's a city boy who finds little to recommend the country. Has a reputation as a dancer, but is able to sit still when strapped in his chair.

Diane Tavener, 18, is from Yeovil, a mere few hours walk from the AA headquarters in Somerton. Diane will be handling office administration, and dealing with subscription enquiries. With a bit of luck she'll get us all organised. Diane's pretty hot on languages, so if any Germans ring she should be able to sort them out. She also plays the piano, but we don't think there'll be much call for that in the office.

West country blues

Everyone told us that Somerset was a bit dead on the computer front, but this is ridiculous. While telephone calls from all over the country reveal Amstrad Action to be selling out in numerous newsagents, here in Somerton it's gone down like a lead balloon. Come on-sale day, five copies of issue one turned up in this village's two newsagents. At time of writing, 10 days later, five copies still remain. Aaaaaaaagh! Even our so-called friends only flick through them for a giggle before smugly returning them to the shelf. Mingy lot.

Now come on, people. There must be SOMEONE with an Amstrad somewhere in the region. You've no idea how terrible it feels to be stuck out here alone amidst hundreds of straw-chewing, Spectrum-owning yokels. Pass the cider, someone.

Your Opinion

We toyed with the idea of a Third Opinion. We considered adding a Fourth. We thought of getting the local Morris men to give their views. But in the end, we thought the best people to ask were you, the readers.

What's he on about? You may well ask. The point is, we're expanding our reviews to make them just about the best and most informative thing this side of the Amcyclopaedia Brittanica. We want anybody who's played a NEW, recently released game to write their own mini-review and send it to us. We'll print your opinions along with the main review and the Second Opinion. If you don't get a clear idea of a new game after that lot, you never will.

Obviously, this system means you've got to have access to brand spanking new software. But remember – games are often in the shops at almost the same time as we get our review copies. So if you get the game, sprint home, load up, give it a good work out and then send off your review to us – all in an afternoon.

There are no prizes for this. Just the satisfaction of seeing your name and opinion in print. And the knowledge that you may have prevented someone wasting their money or have helped them on their way to a deeply meaningful experience. Virtue is, after all, its own reward.

Your opinions should be no longer than 80 words and be on a postcard or the back of an envelope ONLY. You don't need to describe the game and say what's happening – there aren't enough words for that! Just give your comments on it in punchy, amusing or angry style. Aim for something like the Second Opinion boxes in this issue.

The address to send to is: *Voice of the People, Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.*

Listings

Yes, we're going to do it. Print type-in program listings, that is. You've asked for them, so you'll get them. Because this is the mag where what you want is what you get. Mind you there is a substantial minority of readers strongly opposed to listings – if you're one of those, don't panic. We're not going overboard on it – probably only one a month. The basic character of Amstrad Action won't change!

Response to the questionnaire showed that a majority of readers wanted to see listings of either utilities or games in the mag. So it's up to you to send us some really hot stuff, particularly in the way of useful programs that you don't need a degree in typing to enter. We're interested in games as well, but only if they're the pick of the bunch.

Naturally, we're going to pay for these gems of programming – a minimum of £50 and up to £100 for the cream. Make sure you send us a copy of the program on tape or disc, as well as a clear print-out and a stamped, addressed envelope if you want your material returned. Send the lot to: Listings Editor, Amstrad Action, Valeside, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.

Salute to Toot

Many readers have written in to ask for more information about the lifestyle of international superstar Toot, who first graced our pages last month.

Normally, Toot is extremely reticent about his private life, but after much pleading he agreed to make an exception for the readers of Amstrad Action and to write us a diary of a typical day in his rich and varied life – the kind of life the rest of us can only dream of leading.

11.00 a.m. I am woken by my faithful Chinese manservant, Deng, bringing breakfast on my favourite silver tray. While the champagne chills to *exactly* the right temperature I speed-read through the mail and select the half a dozen or so invitations which seem at least faintly interesting. Dinner with Diana and Charles? Or a private box at the Wham concert? Today, both seem dreadfully boring. Life is full of difficult choices. But at least the view of Hyde Park from my penthouse balcony is always beautiful.

11.30 – 12.00 While Deng shaves me I telephone the AA Team and warn them I shall be visiting this afternoon. It's so touching to hear the excitement in their voices when they hear I'm coming.

12.30 – 4.00 Luncheon with my financial adviser at the club. She's a crashing bore with all her facts and figures and profits and losses. I try to shift the conversation to the latest Mastergame, but she merely stares at me with an expression of utter blankness on her spreadsheet face. Still, it seems I am a few million richer than last month and the brandy here really is very good indeed.

4.00 – 5.00 Deng drives the Rolls Royce Phantom Cloud Wraith with built-in Amstrad and jacuzzi to Somerton. I decide against the jacuzzi and concentrate instead on *Highway Encounter*, which Wade has called to tell me may be the Mastergame. I am almost impressed, although it does seem rather similar to an idea I had a couple of years ago...

5.00 The AA Team cheer and throw their caps in the air as I descend with only a little help from my Deng from the cushioned depths of my Rolls Royce Phantom Cloud Wraith with built-in jacuzzi and Amstrad. As I walk down the red carpet and am introduced to the new faces, bestowing a smile here and a word of encouragement of there, I realise what a great thrill it is for these normally dull and insignificant people to be near me, if only for a few moments.

5.00 – 5.30 I quiz the Publisher on his finances, tell Wade what ratings he must give the games, order the Editor to give me prominence in the magazine, and remind 'Trev' that I am rather more handsome than he is giving me credit for. They are all suitably respectful. I warn them that their already tiny wage packets will be even thinner if they do not do as they are told.

5.45 With tears in their eyes the AA Team bid me farewell as I climb back in to the Rolls Royce Phantom Cloud Wraith with built-in jacuzzi and Amstrad. When will they see me again? The poor things, they have no idea.

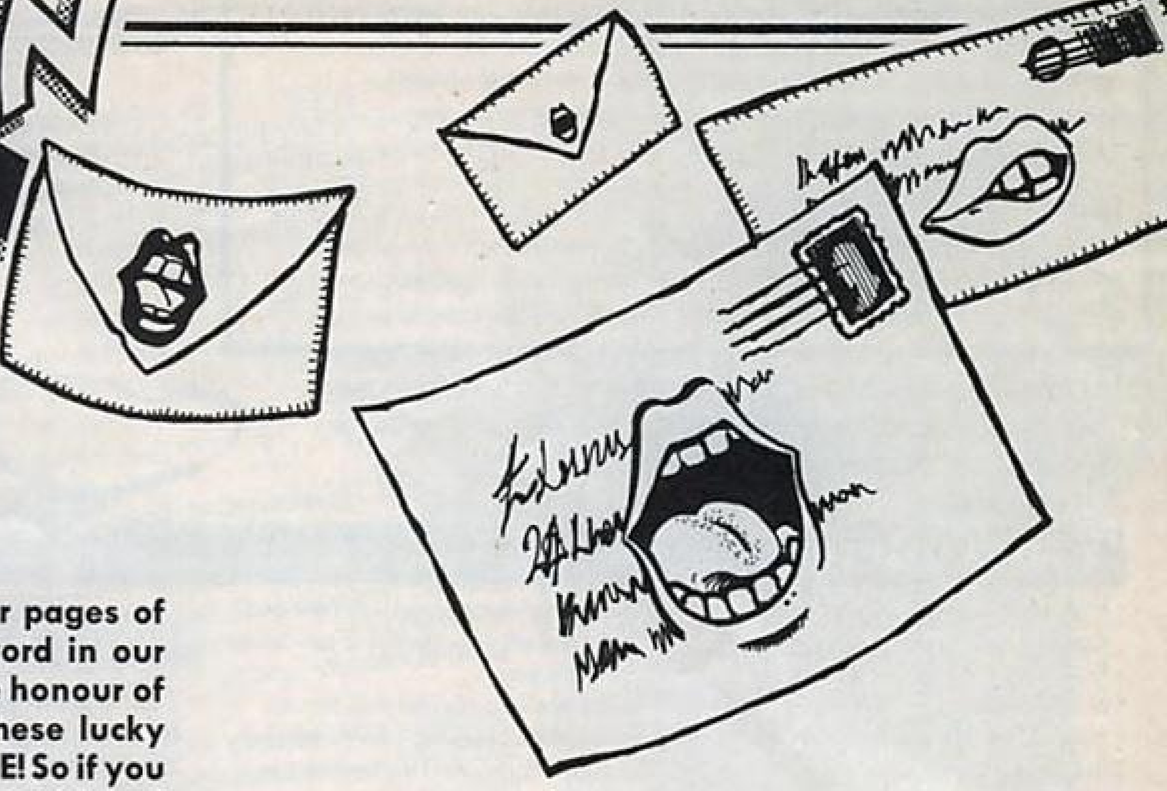
7.00 Time to prepare for the evening. I have decided to have what people call 'a quiet night in'. I have seen enough of royalty and pop stars this week. So it will be a little candlelit supper for 50 or so. I must try not to eat so much caviar tonight. Can my waistline really be thickening?

8.00 After my bubble-bath and massage Deng lays out a dozen or so suits for me to choose from. I pick one at random – they're all so beautiful – and listen to a little Mozart while I slip into it. I always find Mozart so *civilised*. Don't you agree?

9.00 I greet my guests and realise that I would rather have gone to the Wham concert – any concert – rather than face this collection of politicians, film stars and magnates. Sometimes I almost crave the company of *ordinary* people.

1.00 a.m. I slip away to my bedroom, leaving the guests still guzzling the exquisite food and playing *the latest Amstrad games*. An early night for me, as I curl up with the latest Jeffrey Archer. It's the only way to get a good night's sleep.

Re-ACTION



Your chance to bite back is here at last. Four pages of outrage, horror and abuse – and the odd word in our favour. Editor Pete Connor tries to salvage the honour of Amstrad Action with his replies. Some of these lucky letter-writers will be receiving FREE SOFTWARE! So if you want to make your views heard, and you like the idea of getting something for almost nothing, send your letters to: ReAction, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.

Desperate plea

I've written in to express my view on your new magazine. What can I say? Brilliant, fantastic, wow!! One point I must plead. Please – no program listings.

Another minor quibble is that it might be a good idea to cut down the amount of software reviews but go into more depth on the ones you do review. Apart from that, keep up the good work. I am keenly awaiting my next copy of Amstrad Action through the post next month.

Ian Ridley
Liverpool

Sorry Ian – listings are in. But not in a big way, so I don't think they will spoil your enjoyment of the mag. I think you'll find that games are reviewed in even more depth this month and that they have more space.

Minority Pursuit

Congratulations on an excellent first issue of Amstrad Action. I found it most interesting and appreciated, in particular, Amsyclopedia and a regular Adventure feature. We adventurers may be a minority of computer players, but we are very dedicated to our task and we are always on the lookout for new and original puzzles. May I suggest an Amsyclopedia of adventure games?

Lorna Paterson
Tillicoultry, Clackmannanshire

Hope you like the extra space The Pilgrim gets in this issue. He's pondering the idea of an Adventure Amsyclopedia, but it's a mammoth task, even for someone as dedicated as he is.

Amstrad Ami

For the first time I don't feel that a review of a game is glib, but that it has actually been played. In other magazines the reviewers of games and add-ons tend to refer to ROMs and RAMs etc. very glibly, in such a way that I feel almost excluded. They are the 'experts' and I the stupid one who has not reached their level of expertise yet.

It is in my nature to learn slowly and I enjoy doing so. I do not like to be told once – 'and sorry boys that was in issue one and we've sold out and hard luck' – and to be verbally rapped.

By the way, my 464 is named Ami. Has anyone else got a named 464? Has Ami got any brothers or sisters?

Brian Privett
London W2

Glad you like it Brian. We don't want anyone to feel we're trying to exclude them with boffin-talk and technical wizardry. One thing puzzles me though. Why has your Amstrad got a French name?

'VIVLA FRANCE'
UP THE EIFFEL TOWER
AMI

Zest is best

I have been the proud owner of an Amstrad for around a year now and I must say I wouldn't be happy with anything else. But I have been disappointed with the other magazines, finding the reviews biased and the mags boring and generally lacking ZEST.

I eagerly awaited Amstrad Action and, having thoroughly read the first issue, I can't wait to take out a year's subscription and collect the two games. The reviews are great and unlike other magazines that do their reviews out of five – which is ridiculous and doesn't offer wide enough scope – give an excellent faithful review. I thought the magazine was a little thin but I'm sure it will grow thicker as AA takes off.

Julian Smalley
Selston, Notts.

The Young Ones?

Congratulations on a mega-superb magazine. Well, that's what I think. My dad thought I should carry on getting *Your Computer*. Ooops! Sorry.

Now a few comments on the AA Team. They look a bit young to have a responsible position. Couldn't you get someone who looks a bit more intelligent? And as for Bob Ewing, sorry... Jenner Wade, er.. Bob Wade – he looks a bit of a jerk. The only serious-looking person is Peter Connor.

Well, that's it. Looking forward to your next publication.

Robert Shepherd
Sutton-On-Sea, Lincolnshire

How old do you have to be to have a responsible position, Robert? Anyway, after getting out the first issue, the last thing any of us felt was young. Bob Wade is not a jerk, but he does occasionally do some stand-in work on Dallas. And Peter Connor didn't look serious – just worried.

Ratings rage

Great mag, great reviews, great competitions. The reviews were quite accurate but how can *Fist* have a Staying Power rating of 95%? It's the most boring game I've played for ages. 'Plenty of lasting challenge in all 10 dans': all that changes are a few levels of difficulty. I would give it around 30%.

Mat Brown

Bob Wade stands by his rating. Of course, if you're a pacifist I can see you might not like it...

The best days of your life

After coming back from my holidays feeling despondent, walking to school on a grey Thursday morning, I had one pound left from my hols.

I walked into the newsagents to buy some sweets. As I was walking to the counter I glimpsed over towards the magazines and saw a green eye glaring straight back at me. Forget the sweets – a new Amstrad mag! With 130 games tested! I couldn't believe my eyes.

I opened the magazine with baited breath and saw page after page of reviews. I thought – brill. This is the mag for me. Just what I've been waiting for. At last, no more stupid program listings that don't work. Just game reviews and the latest news. Out with the cash in a flash without hesitation and I walked to school reading it.

First lesson, double maths. What a drag. But not for me, because I had my Amstrad Action. So out with the mag to get

http://www.oldgamesitalia.net/ http://www.oldgamesitalia.net/

Big spender

Having bought your brill, excellent, superb mag I must say for a first issue it ain't bad. However, there is just one small teeny-weeny grumble. Looking through your mag – with trusty pen and cheque book – I casually wrote cheques worth £28.85. Would it be possible not to make your reviews so persuasive?

To add to this moment of sheer extravagance my Amstrad's tape-deck packed up. It has, unfortunately, been sent out to the computer's equivalent of a hospital. Now I'm faced with the prospect of having three super, whizz, pow, bang etc.games with nothing to play them on. Now *Combat Lynx* won't get lynxed, *Alien 8* will stay alien and *Beach-head* won't get landed.

Still, life goes on. I've still got the cat to boot about! I'm looking forward to the next issue and hoping it's better – if that's truly possible – than the first issue.

S. Lota
London E7

You have our sympathy, but we hope you don't really take out your frustration on the cat.

Shy adventurer

I was passing the newsagent's the other day when I saw this brill, fab etc. piece of literature standing on the news-stand (quite logical really) and guess what – I decided to buy Amstrad Action instead.

Tape WINNER

some action. I got so carried away reading it I didn't see the teacher come over to my desk. He confiscated it till the end of the day. Oh, well, back to the boredom of the maths lesson. When the teacher went back to his desk he started reading it. At three o'clock I went to collect the mag. I asked the teacher if he'd enjoyed it. At last I could read it through to the end.

My mum was glad because I wasn't using my Amstrad – she's always nagging me for using it too much. All I can say is brilliant, fantastic, superb...the ultimate magazine.

Paul Edwards
Stevenage, Herts.

Seriously, though, I really like it. Bob Wade's method of reviewing is very good, especially the use of percentages. I was very impressed by the reviews for the various adventure games, but I've never played an adventure before. I'd ask The Pilgrim, but I've got a feeling he wouldn't be willing to speak to someone who doesn't even know how to deal with a dwarf. I want to ask which would be an adventure game that an utter useless novice such as myself could attempt. I mean one where I wouldn't kill myself within 10 seconds.

Abdul Choudhury
Manchester

Afraid of The Pilgrim? Don't be silly. He's one of the most sympathetic adventurers I've ever come across. I'm sure he'd be very happy to help. So go ahead – ask him.

Pale and Insipid

Here are my comments on Amstrad Action.

Reviews: the basic format is very good, but surely the use of more colour would brighten them up a great deal. Also, why not a Third Opinion?

Overall tone: rather pale and insipid. More colour would help. Although it is the first issue, and reader's letters can't be expected yet, their absence shows just how crucial they are. And the more the better.

Amsyclopedia: this is very welcome, but could it be better organised in future? Also, could you ring the changes on the titles reviewed every month. I assume it will be a regular feature.

Advertisements: Is it really in order for a software house to hype one of its programs in a machine-specific magazine by using quotes from reviews of the that program for another cmputer?

Competitions: If these are going to be regular, please do not go for the spot-the -difference or word-square type, but try to get your readers to use their brains. And if you are going to run more than one competition in each issue, could you make it possible to for all us comp freaks to send in all our replies on one envelope?

J.V.Gray
Portsmouth

Pale and insipid? Come off it Mr. Gray – you obviously like very strong meat indeed. As for a Third Opinion, we'll be doing even better than that from the next issue onwards. See Edlines for details.

I couldn't agree more about letters. The proof is in these four pages. Amsyclopedia is not a regular, but was a special feature for the first issue. Advertisements are something that everybody reads with eagle eyes – we think readers are shrewd enough to see what's what. With competitions it makes life incredibly complex if we can't file entries in separate places – and we think we've got some pretty interesting ones on the way.

Travel sickness

I would like to congratulate you on an excellent magazine. It is by far the best one available for the Amstrad. I do, however, have some constructive criticisms, which I hope you take note of.

In reviews of conversions I am sure readers would be interested in how well the game travelled. For example, *Beach-Head* from US Gold was described as the best game of its type on the Amstrad. It is, in fact, a very chunky game in comparison with the Commodore or Spectrum versions.

Also, *Exploding Fist* from Melbourne House, although graphically very good, did not – like the Commodore version – feature bulls, changing backgrounds, or speech and music (apart from a small jingle).

It is apparent both versions suffered from hurried conversions so if magazines like yours highlight the problem, I am sure this will become more rare.

H. Kasser
Ilford, Essex

We think Amstrad games should be judged on their merits as Amstrad games, and not on how they shape up to the original if they're conversions. Of course, if it looks like a conversion has been done shoddily or in a rush, we'll say so. But we were mightily impressed with the games you mentioned. Software houses are now using the Amstrad as a developement machine – that means that games will be original and there will be no question of how well they've been converted.

Sequel sadness

Amstrad Action is a breath of fresh air. After being besieged by third-rate mags for months, you're like the 7th Cavalry! Although not a games mag in the true sense, with small bits on the smaller operations (i.e. business, hardware) the review section is simply the best.

With a stylish, modern look, a bustworthy team of reviewers – ex-PCG to mag readers is like ex-Green Berets to army officers – and Toot, it's a sure-fire winner.

But now I must do my bit to try and improve it.

It's about sequels of games where the predecessor has sold in droves. In their own right, they may be great. But they may be easier, old hat, less value for money or just plain boring to a person with the first part.

The classic case is *Knight Lore* and *Alien 8*. The latter is a great game with terrific graphics and animation and unbeatable gameplay, but a *Knight Lore* owner may feel cheated. And in some aspects, rightly so. However, Ultimate's graphics are always only half of the game's appeal. The challenges are always exhausting and skill is needed to beat them, so it is here that *Alien 8* wins.

Perhaps you will try to remember that games are expensive and no-one wants to pay for the same thing twice.

Liam McMaster
Whitehaven, Cumbria

You're right. Games certainly are expensive, and we'll carry on doing our best to make sure you don't waste your money on rubbish. I see what you mean about some sequels being very similar to the predecessors, but in the case of the Ultimate games I think that if you had Knight Lore you'd probably have given an arm and a leg to get Alien 8.

AMSTRAD ACTION
BN
CHARGE MEN

To List or not to List?

Congratulations! I didn't know it was possible to publish a new magazine and make it an immediate No.1. I've read quite a few mags to try to find one that would give me just what I want – software reviews – and most of them go half way by only giving a few pages of reviews. The rest of the mag is usually full of rubbish trying to make it look fuller and more value-for-money. Your mag is definitely a hit with me. I'll be subscribing as soon as I save the cash!

Please don't start putting in type-in listings – there are plenty of mags around already that have pages and pages of that, and you don't need to do it.

On the game-voting chart you only allow 10 votes for five games. I think it's impossible trying to pick up to five games with only 10 votes between them. I would have given all 10 votes to *Exploding Fist*, only I had some other semi-favourites. *Dun Darach* is a good, but time-consuming arcade adventure. Until I work out why some things work it will take more of my beauty-sleep.

It's great to see more independent software companies and publishers taking an interest in what I would say – very biasedly – is the best home/small business computer on the market.

So, congratulations again. I hope you'll grow in everyone else's estimates, as well as make tonnes of pennies.

And Toot is A-mazing.

Stan Glendenning
Darlington, Durham

We think it's the best home/small business computer on the market, too. As far as listings go, the response to our questionnaire suggests that they are in demand so we're going to be printing probably one a month. Sorry about that Stan, but you can always skip the pages or just admire the artwork. 10 votes seemed pretty generous to us – any more and we'd have to employ an army of counters to tot them up.

AMSTRAD ACTION
CRE' SARG-IS THIS THE LAST POST

Colour comment

I have only one comment. That is that some of your screen shots are in black and white. They should be in colour because it makes a lot of difference to the overall screen shot. Apart from that your mag is great.

Jesse Arthur
Heathfield, E.Sussex

MEAN WHILE IN THE FAR REACHES OF SPACE
NOW BACK TO → THOSE LETTERS

Compatibility

May I say how welcome and long-overdue your magazine is. However, upon perusing it, I have one serious criticism.

On the cover is emblazoned 'Power-packed reviews each month for the CPC 464 and 664.' So far so good. But – as the proud owner of a 664 (conned by Amstrad marketing policy) I searched the contents of your magazine for any mention of *any* of the games being reviewed being compatible or otherwise with the 664. No such mention exists. I feel that your magazine, in company with the other two existing magazines, displays great insensitivity towards 664 owners in not providing thihs information.

May I suggest in future a brief remark beside each game reviewed, such as 464/664 compatible would solve the problem.

P.J.E. Marshall
Swindon, Wilts.

You're absolutely right Mr. Marshall, and with the new 6128 there's even more call for this information. So from the next issue on we'll be providing a clear indication of a game's compatibility across the Amstrad range.

Disgusted

First let me congratulate you on a fantastic magazine which is in my opinion – and other Amstrad Users' – long overdue. Now I can look forward to better value for my money each month when buying a magazine.

Secondly, I'd like to voice my disgust to Amstrad who slyly announced the birth of the CPC 6128 and the death of the short-lived CPC 664. Having sold my 464 for the faster disc-driven 664 for the cost of £335, the following day Alan Sugar announces another addition to the Amstrad family – the 128K selling at £299. £35 cheaper. Why the death of the 664? Alan Sugar replied that it was due to a 'leap in technology'. Surely he knew he could turn out a 128K machine for £299 *before* the 664 was launched? It makes you wonder if the 6128 is good value. Or is there a CPC2565 awaiting launch at Christmas for the same price. So is it worth buying a new computer today or buying a second-hand one, considering 'leaps in technology'?

Once again congratulations on a great mag and I look forward to seeing you on the stands every month.

Paul Formosa
Cardiff

We sympathise with your plight Paul. It must be like buying a horse and cart just before the motor car comes out. Do any other 664 owners have strong feelings on this?

The Bizzness

It is about time someone had the guts to "do the bizzness" and bring out a truly independent magazine for the Amstrad. I only wonder what your mag will contain in future months, as you've gone through all the software in one issue.

Right, so I like the launch issue, but I have some questions to ask and some contentions to contend.

1. Why do most software houses use the slow load/save speed? If they are worried about safety then why not have one side slow and the other fast?

2. Name a reliable tape-copying utility, so that I can have fast-loading copies of my present software. Or, better still, publish a listing. I'm cheesed off with waiting.

4. Where is *Elite*, the game? I want it, and I want it now.

6. I hate cheating pokes etc. Why can't people play the game as it was meant to be played instead of fiddling about. Fair enough, give some tips on strategy etc. You can gain by cheating by poker or something – but what do you gain by having a zillion lives in Knight Lore? Just the feeling that you've cheated.

Spud Murphy
Swansea

Software houses use slow loads because it's much more reliable. Name a tape-copying utility? I might as well put my head in a noose. I can understand your impatience about Elite, but I'm afraid you just can't have it now. Try waiting until the end of October. Playing tips are something you don't have to read if you want to play the game unaided. What you gain by having a zillion lives in a game is a better chance of solving it.

ZILLION FC V LONE ONE

Value for Money

I would like to thank you for the first issue of Amstrad Action.

A lot of the magazine is good, but I would like to see game/utility and Basic and Machine Code articles.

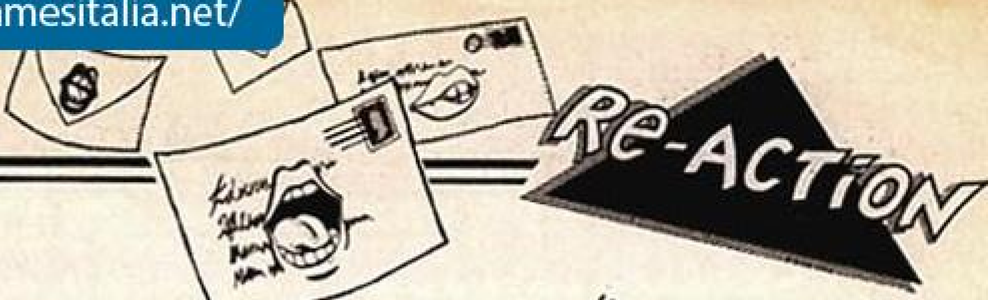
The only criticism I have of the reviews is that there is no Value for Money heading, but there is Grab Factor and Staying Power. To me they mean the same!

Perhaps you could mention two clubs for me? they are the AP Exchange and the Manchester Amstrad User Club. AP Exchange is for the amateur programmer. For a sample newsletter send £1 to N. Godwin, 4 Hurbur Crescent, Eyemouth, Berwickshire, Scotland TD14 5AP.

The Manchester Amstrad User Club is aimed at the beginner and has its own newsletter. Membership is £8 a year. For more information write to Steve Stanner, 21 Gatling Ave., Longsight, Manchester M12 5SX.

C. Bryant
Seaton, Devon

We're introducing some listings in future issues. Value for Money is included in the AA Rating, which takes into account all factors in a game.



THOUGHT EVERYONE LIKED THOSE OLD BLACK AND WHITES

Mono moan

I am writing to congratulate you on publishing such an excellent magazine.

The only complaint I have is that you don't use colour in your Amsyclopaedia. It would be a lot better if you did because at the moment this section looks dull. But otherwise – a fantastic magazine.

Gurpreet Sanghera
West Bromwich, West Midlands

Unfortunately, we can't use colour everywhere – if we did, the cover price of the magazine would be about £10. We think the colour pages are best used for reviews of the hot new games so that we can show you what they really look like.

Not the mag for him

I bought the first issue of Amstrad Action today, because according to the cover full details of the new Amstrads were inside.

All I could find was a brief note on page 8 concerning the two new machines – hardly full details, which should cover at least 2 pages for EACH machine. I would hate to read your version of other magazines' brief reviews.

I then turned to page 28 to read the *Wordstar* review... WHAT is a WROD-PROCESSOR????

It's not the magazine for me.

J.H.Treacy
London N19

A brief note? Two pages seems a bit more than that. Full spec, photos, software houses' reactions.. Try the 8256 review in this issue – if you're still with us. A WROD processor is a joke – the kind of thing that happens when you make a mistake on a WORD processor.

Club request

You obviously need to know what kind of reader you are attracting. Well, I'm 38, married (no kids), working full-time as a despatch supervisor, own an Amstrad 464 and previously used my father's ZX81, and when he up-graded, his Spectrum. Some consider me to be a character – they are probably right!

About reviews: from the answers you get on the questionnaire, why not pick three or four readers and invite them to review software for you to supplement your own reviews. Pick one for each age-group/background. That way you will get a slice of opinion which reflects the views of the people who actually buy the software.

Another idea would be a contact page where readers can get in touch with others (Help – how do I get out of the guardroom in *Robin of Sherwood*) who are playing the same games or who have tips they can pass on.

You could also start up your very own AAC – Amstrad Action Club – and organise visits to Amstrad themselves, or to software houses to see how it is done. Arrange feedback get-togethers where we can tell the software and hardware people what we would like to see on the market.

Thanks for a magazine which promises to become great.

Alan
Worthing, Sussex

We won't be doing quite what you suggest Alan, but pretty near. So if you fancy letting the world know what you feel about a game, read the piece in Ed-Lines and then get writing. A contact page isn't really possible at the moment – what would we drop to make room for it? But we're more than happy to print names and addresses of clubs here in ReAction. As for our own club, it's a nice idea but we really haven't got the time. Getting the mag out is a pretty big job in itself – we don't get any time off.

THE TOOTTENHAM HOTSPUR CLUB

Showing promise

I have just read the first issue of your mag. It shows promise – and everyone's got to start somewhere. Just think, such enterprise in Somerton. I regularly visit the area and it will never seem the same again. Such a sleepy place concealing such initiative and talent. How could I possibly not support such a venture? I may even be tempted into a subscription if the right incentives present themselves (I don't fancy any of the games on offer this month)..

Seriously though. Got a good proof reader? Without even trying – Page 20: for 'WROD processor', read 'WORD processor'. Front cover: for 'FREE see page 96', read 'FREE see page 84'. The existing proof-reader wants a WROD in his ear! You can't get the staff you know.

More seriously, though, and on a more sombre note – a good effort for a first mag. All teething troubles will sort themselves out. But it will be difficult with such a comparatively young editorial staff to aim the magazine at the right level of interst. In my particular area, for instance, a large number of Amstrad owners are aged 35 - 45 years. While there should be content in the mag for all age-groups it would be a mistake to gear it more exclusively towards the young enthusiast, or to make it too flash or too trendy in presentation.

I think the magazine, while it should be a readable and a well-balanced diet of light-hearted repartee and serious matters, should above all be professional in approach, outlook and presentation., It is, in my view, counter-productive to sacrifice quality and preparation for lower production costs and, perhaps, an ill-considered image. Never forget where the money is – i.e. with Dad, or so my children think – and who has to be persuaded to part with it.

I look forward to your future magazines with interest and sincerely hope you get it right. There is always room for a good honest mag with the interests of its readers at heart.

D.J.Simmons
Shoreham-by-Sea, Sussex

Tape WINNER

It's a fair cop, Mr.Simmons – almost. There were many errors in the first issue, mainly due to the horrible rush to get it ready on time. Not to mention technological teething troubles. But WROD really was intentional. It was supposed to be a joke. Honest.

We're very conscious of the need to produce a magazine that Amstrad owners genuinely want to read, which is why letters like yours are so valuable. But Somerton's not that sleepy, *you know.*

Shock horror!

I am appalled!

I have just purchased and read the first copy of Amstrad Action and I find it extrememly offensive. Personally I would give up now because the magazine is of a poor quality.

You lower the general class of the magazine by constant use of the words 'sussed' and 'sonics'. The only point to your credit is the Amsyclopedia, which is still not perfect as it is not in alphabetical order.

David Butterworth
Lymington, Hampshire

We strive for perfection, David, and are truly sorry for any offense we may have given you by our use of the English Language. Amsyclopedia was written by category of game. Perhaps you should stick to 'The Times'. But they don't review as many games as we do. I can assure other readers that we are **not** *going to give up.*

Slightly mad?

Congratulations on the successful launch of Amstrad Action. It's bright, informative, slightly mad and good value for money. I currently subscribe to ******* , but that is likely to change. Your 'rivals' appear to be very good for people who have a background knowledge of computing, but as I've only owned an Arnold for about five months and find very little spare time, they are invariably too technical. Articles about Sideways ROM, CP/M, Hisoft C, Machine Code etc. are quite simply over my head.

However, Amstrad Action appears to be more my kind of mag. It's difficult to determine how good a publication is after only one issue, but it feels right. Hopefully, I'll be able to progress with the mag as the months go by.

About the mag itself. Amsyclopedia is a great idea. There were many many reviews I hadn't read, and it will be invaluable when choosing future software. A mistake can be costly, software prices being what they are.

I love the Cheat Mode pages. *Sorcery* won't be quite so frustrating. How about a regular feature for beginners like me on the bare bones of a listing? I've typed in a few listings in the past few months, but do not really inderstand what each line does.

I've enclosed the questionnaire. Funny, I've never written to a mag before.

T.K. Robertson
Pontypridd

We're going to be printing some listings in future issues, but we'll ensure that they're clearly presented and fully explained. We'll also be covering some of the topics you mentioned – but in a non-boffin way. As for 'slightly mad', there are people here who are totally bonkers.

CONNOR: THE SANCTUARY OF SANITY AT AA

Unprof progs

Congratulations on a very entertaining first issue. I liked it *all* very much. It's about time we Amstrad owners got a decent magazine which does not lecture us on processors, technical matters and generally useless info.

I would like to mention one or two aspects of Amstrad software:

1. Some top progs are very unprofessional. *Ghostbusters* features scrolling designed to give people headaches. *Exploding Fist* has a naff high-score table and your man sometimes merges with the other in between games.
2. Some conversions, e.g. *Jet Set Willy*, do not make full use of the Amstrad's capabilities – in particular, sound. Please put pressure on companies to produce decent sound and music.
3. Availability – no major shops in my area have up-to-date software.

Ben Vickers
Stratford-upon-Avon

COMPUTER SOFTWARE
CAN I HELP YOU?

High-score kid

I have just bought your first edition. It was very good and I hope the next one I buy will be just as good. Arnold is our first computer and as I am a busy wife and mum I don't have as much time as I would like to uses it. Still, I mustn't complain – I am going to drag my ever-loving husband to the London exhibition with me.

I hope that – unlike some other magazines – you will not assume that all computer users are male and under 30. I get fed up with articles that say 'EVEN mum can do it.' I do a couple of evening classes in Basic and although I am not a genius I know a little. So don't be condescending please.

Do you know any good zapping games that are not too fast for a seven and a half year old who gets very frustrated when these quick games kill him off before he gets going. He just wants his name on the high-score table.

Mrs. Pauline Hinton
Reading, Berks.

We certinly won't be condescending, Mrs. Hinton – if only because we're not boffins ourselves. Just enthusiasts like yourself. And there'll be no sexism or MUMism either. We reckon Amsoft's Laserwarp or Alien Break-In should be the kind of games your son could do very well at. Both are £8.95 and reviewed in Issue One's Amsyclopedia.

Pirate Pal

I am writing to you about a friend of mine – who shall remain nameless – and his habit of buying games. He will go into a shop, buy a game, pirate it, take it back, make up an excuse and exchange it for another or get his money back. Once he bought three £1.99 games, kept them for four months and used them as blanks until they were broken. Then he took them back saying his mum had bought them yesterday for the wrong computer and got his money back.

I think this kind of attitude ruins software companies. At the moment I am saving up for *Hypersports* whereas my friend would just pirate it and take it back.

R.Edwards
Crewe, Cheshire

That's a pretty sneaky pal you've got there. And you're right – this sort of thing does damage software companies, and in the end, the software user. Does your friend know that he's not just cheating, but breaking the law?

The official version

I like your mag. Even more I like the refreshing and lively style the format takes. You see, ever since I started to use an Amstrad computer I have known only the 'official' method of magazine publishing. Mainly boring straight-faced editorial attempting to pad out lively colourful adverts.

I liked your word processor comparison. I have become very much at home with *Tasword* and with that in mind I have given below a quick list of personalisings that colour users may find acceptable.

The following numbers entered in place of the ones shown in brackets in the customising mode will give a restful colourset and a left margin which is handy in printing.

After answering Y to Change Program, type in the following numbers:

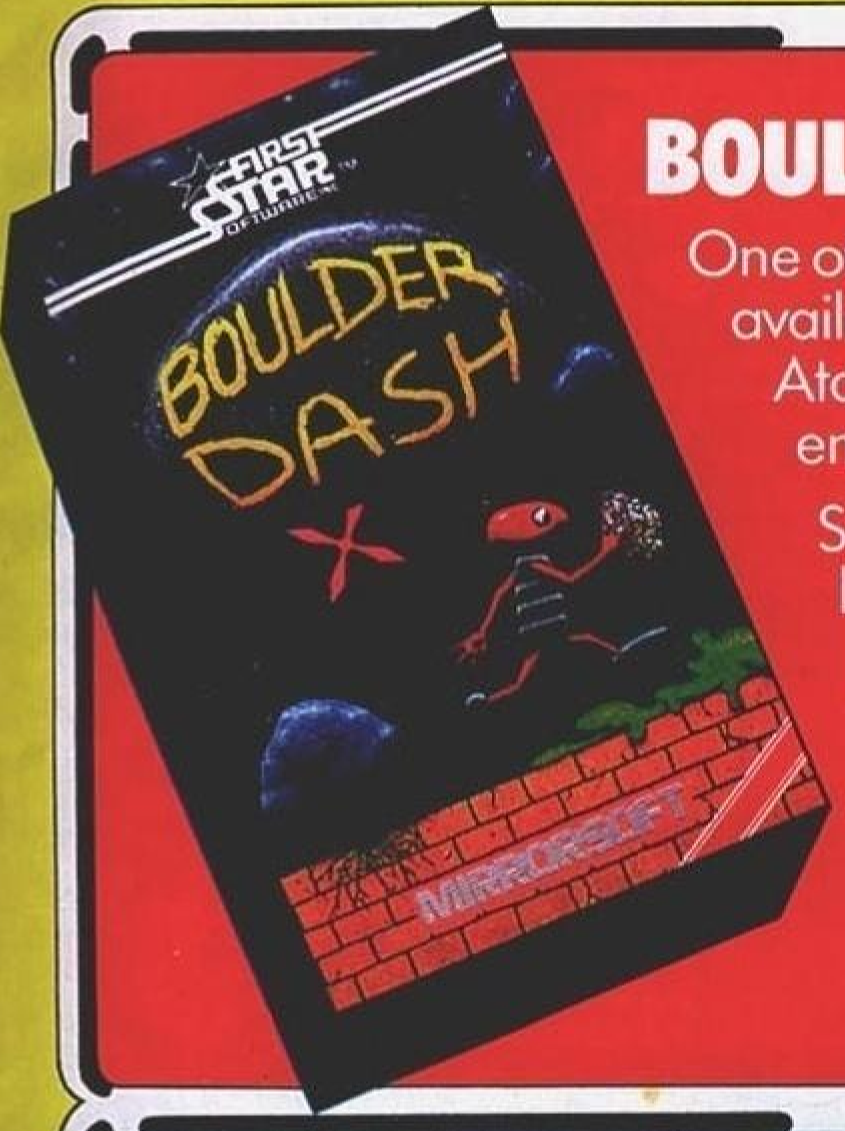
Pen Colour 23 Cursor Shape 4
Paper Colour 1 Cursor Type 1
Border Colour 1 Left Margin 3
Border Colour 2 Right Margin 80

That's all from me this time. I don't neccessarily expect you to print this letter but please, please let's see plenty printed. That's one of the other problems with 'officialdom', they don't like to publish letters much. I wonder why...

Paul Hayes
Bexhihll-on-Sea, Sussex

MIRRORSOFT

SEPTEMBER SIZZLERS


FIRST STAR SOFTWARE
BOULDER DASH
MIRRORSOFT

BOULDER DASH

One of the great classic games of all time is now available to even more of you – Amstrad and Atari owners everywhere can now experience the ultimate underground journey.

Search through the 16 caves, each with 5 levels of difficulty, and collect as many jewels as quickly as possible. Don't forget to block the amoebas, transform the butterflies, or outmanoeuvre the fireflies – or you'll never get out alive!

Available September 5th

Amstrad CPC464 and Atari 48K versions back-to-back on one tape at £9.95.

ASHKERON!

'Ashkeron is something for everyone: a complex, challenging, witty game for the adventurer, and its got pretty pics for the zap'em crowd. An excellent game – buy it!' – *Home Computing Weekly*

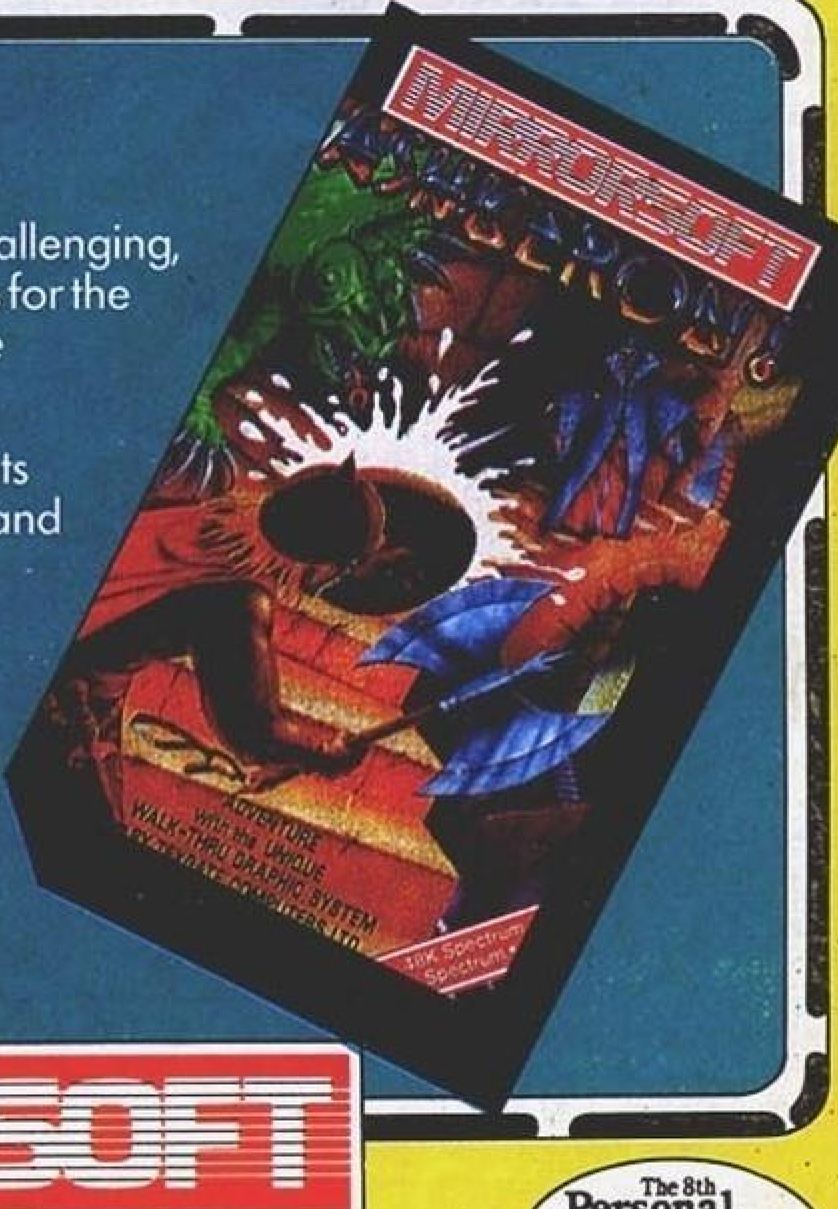
'It is highly professional, sophisticated software…in its walls lies a challenge everyone will find interesting and rewarding' – *Crash Micro*

'This game gets my royal assent' – *Your Spectrum*

'A charming graphic adventure' – *MicroScope*

Available now for
Amstrad CPC464 £6.95
Spectrum 48K £5.95

With built-in competition!


MIRRORSOFT
ASHKERON!
ADVENTURE with the UNIQUE WALK-THRU GRAPHIC SYSTEM
48K Spectrum

MIRRORSOFT

Maxwell House, 74 Worship Street, London EC2A 2EN
Book Centre, Paulton, Bristol BS18 5L

The 8th Personal Computer World

THE PCW PICTURE SHOW

Faces, fun and glamour from the country's biggest computer exhibition.

▶ The only Rambo look-alike at the show seemed to be on the wrong stand. System 3 had hired him to add a bit of muscle to their razzamatazz. But isn't it Ocean who are doing the Rambo game?

The PCW show was just as expected – noisy, crowded and very exciting. Despite the huge queues at 10 a.m. on the opening day the AA Team gained instant admission, perhaps thanks to those glossy pre-production copies of Amstrad Action we were carrying. Of course, the tickets may have helped.

Inside, the Amstrad stand was attracting some heavy attention as crowds flocked round the first public display of the new 6128 and 8256 machines. There was plenty of new software for them to see too including *3D Grand Prix* and *3D Boxing* as well as guest appearances by snooker-player Alex Higgins and soccer star Glenn Hoddle in support of the games bearing their names. Hardware star Alan Sugar was also there, in support of the machines bearing *his* name.

Elsewhere, many of the big games had failed to make it in time for the show and materialised only in the shape of videos of the films and TV progs they're taken from. Ocean had Rambo doing his over-muscled stuff in Nam while Melbourne House showed clips from the cartoon of Lord of the Rings. US Gold displayed bits of Goonies, the latest Stephen Spielberg film.

Personal appearances were the order of the day for a number of characters. Mirrorsoft had an oversize Mr.Man waddling around, preceded by a young lady in a short skirt. One lady not wearing a short skirt was Mirrorsoft's Pat Bitton, who promised Amstrad versions of *Spitfire 40* in mid-October and *Dynamite Dan II* before Christmas. Elsewhere, assorted magicians and pirates wandered around. Dwarfing all of them was the monumental figure of Geoff Capes, playing his own game on the Martech stand. It should be with us on the Amstrad very soon.

Most outrageous stand of the show was System 3's. To publicise their game *Twister, mother of Harlots*, three scantily-clad women writhed and wriggled on a tiny stage while snarling at the audience and slashing each other with whips. System 3's Andy Shafte defended the show: 'If you were a kid would you rather see a big stand saying how much money we've got, or some naughty girls?' I'm not sure Andy. On the Saturday the organisers told System 3 to get rid of the girls. They got rid of the stand. By the following week Andy Shafte was no longer working for System 3.

▶ Ricardo Pinto – left – and Dominic Prior – right – are Torus, the people bringing *Elite* onto the Amstrad very shortly. Don't ask me who the other two are.

▲ A panoramic view of Olympia, home of the software Gods.

▶ People crowding round the new machines on the Amstrad stand.

▶
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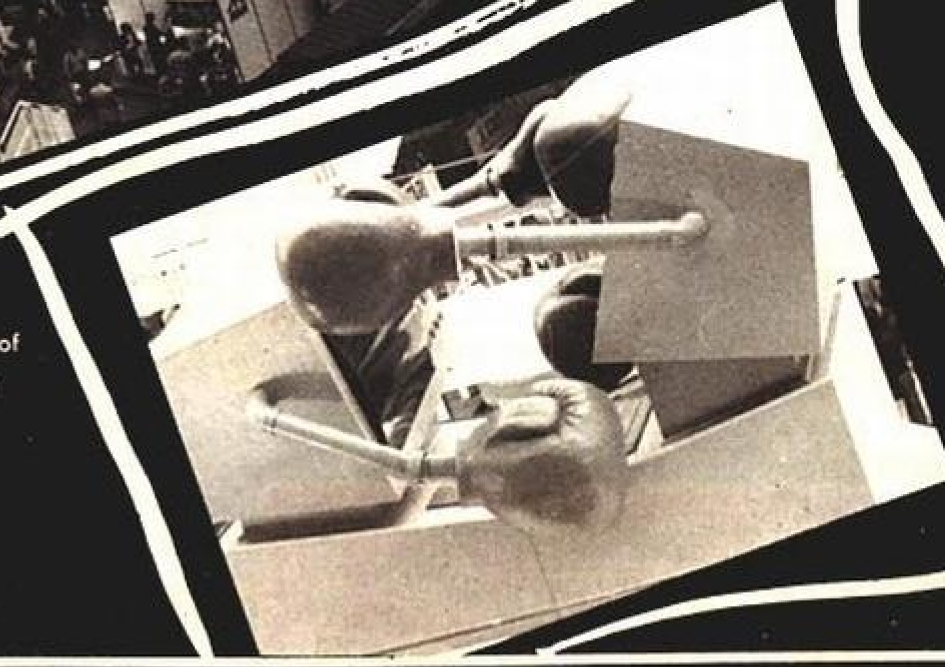
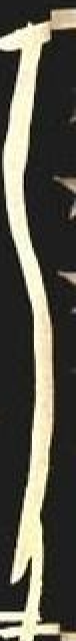


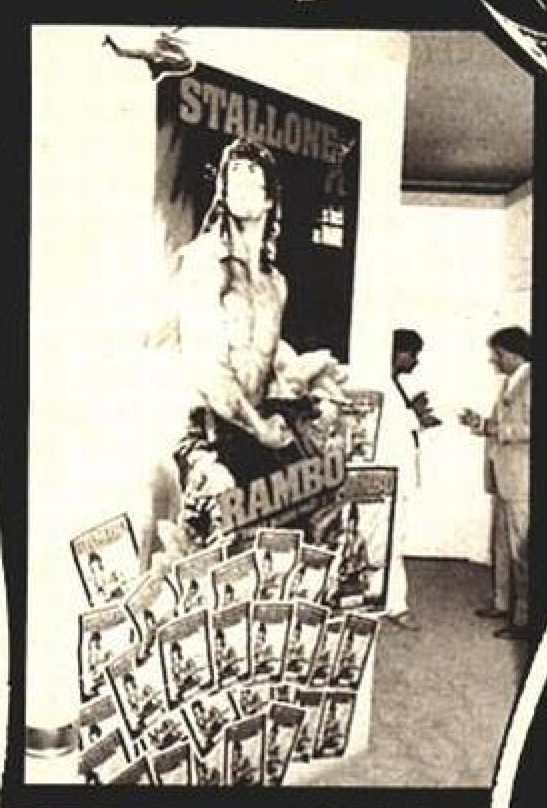
◀ Two sophisticated examples of Artificial Intelligence engage in a free and frank discussion of philosophical issues.



▶ Tim Chaney of US Gold with just a few of the many video screens on his stand.

http://www.oldgamesitalia.net/ http://www.oldgamesitalia.net/

AMSCENE



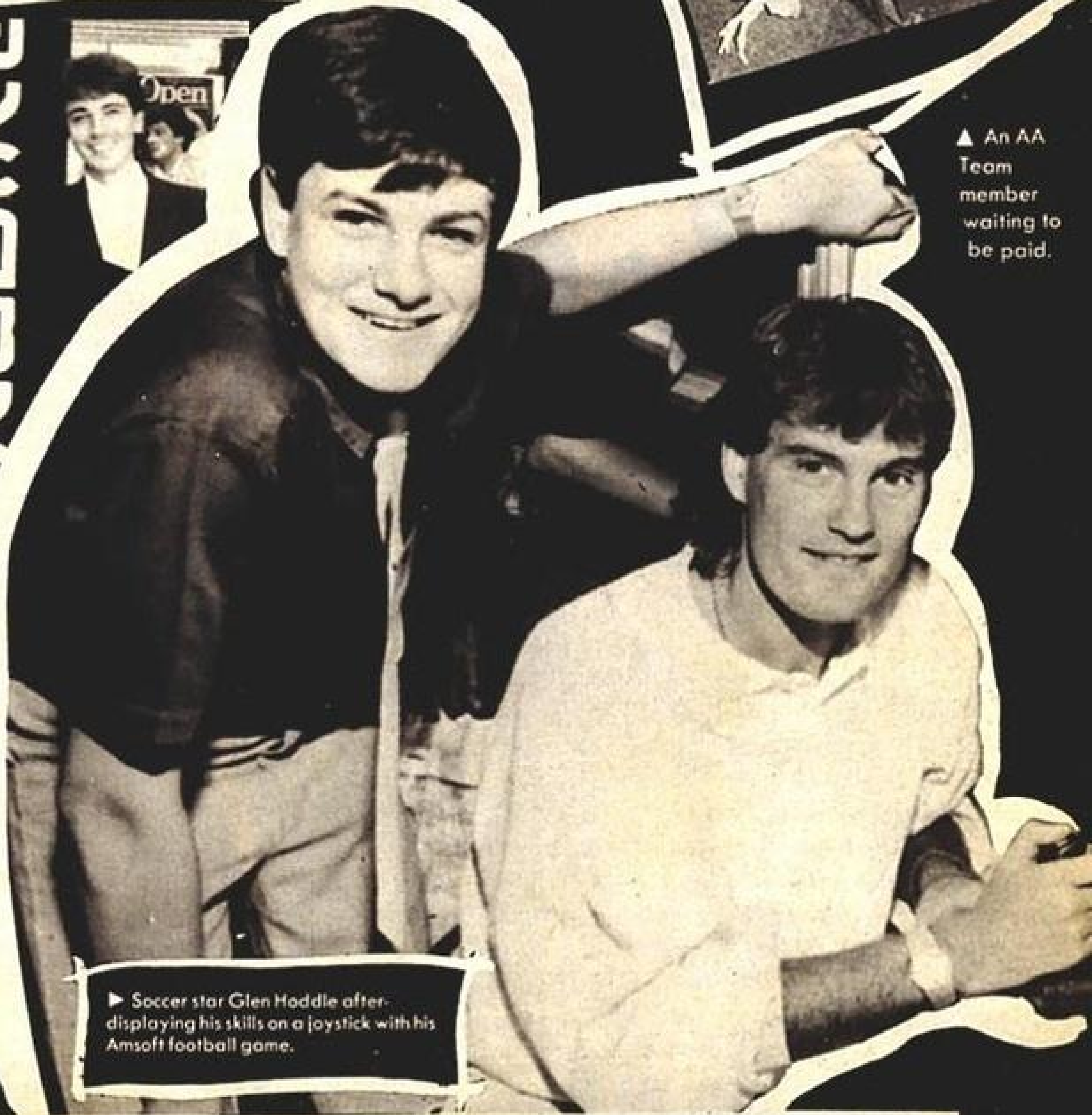
◀ Rambo, Rambo, Rambo, Rambo, Rambo, Rambo, Rambo, Rambo, Rambo, Rambo, Rambo, Rambo...Ocean are producing a game called *Rambo*.

▶ Mirrorsoft's Pat Bitton – the woman who brought you *Boulderdash*. Nice one Pat.

▲ An AA Team member waiting to be paid.

FIREBIRD
Open

▶ Firebird's Herbert Wright (centre) finds something interesting in Amstrad Action. Must have been his photograph.



▶ Soccer star Glen Hoddle after displaying his skills on a joystick with his Amsoft football game.

DATASOFT
DATASOFT
Zorro

http://www.oldgamesitalia.net/ http://www.oldgamesitalia.net/

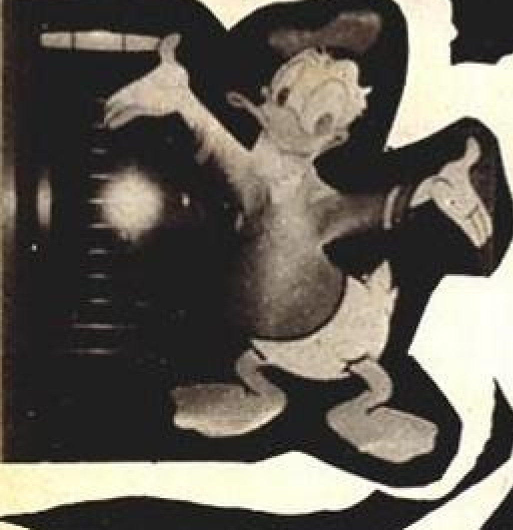
► Activision's Andy Wright plays a Spectrum game. Or has he just got a nasty shock?

▼ Rod Cousens, formerly of Quicksilva, now of Electric Dreams, here seen in the company of Activision's Clare Trotter.

◄ This distinguished gentlema none other than Merlock Mede, who will be making appearance in a forthcom series of adventu from Terminal. hope programmin as good as the costu

► David Palmer(left) and Mike Mahoney sporting happy grins on the Alligata stand.

◄ A stray pirate from the Mikrogen stand. Looks altogether too young to be in the bucaneering business.



► Alex Higgins, minus his cue, gives tips on micro-snooker.

◄ Quack, quack. Two Donald Ducks hanging around the US Gold stand.

► Geoff Capes, ex-world's strongest man, waggles for dear life on the Martech stand. Wonder what joystick he prefers?

Ariola's five

Ariolasoft are winding up for the Christmas bonanza by releasing five titles in October and November. Pre-Amstrad versions of these could be seen running on their 200-square-foot video 'wall' at the PCW show.

First out, towards the end of October, will be *Archon* and *One on One*. The first of these is a blend of strategy and action on a chess board - if you want to take a piece you'll be forced to do battle with your opponent. *Archon* costs £10.95 - a bit extra because it comes in a de-luxe box with booklet. *One on One* is the hit basketball game in which you control either Larry Bird or Dr. Julius Irving, two very tall men who happen to be the biggest stars in US ball. There's no de-luxe box so it only costs £8.95.

Other imminent releases are *Skyfox* – the super-flight-simulator – and Wizard, a 100-screen adventure game. Both will cost around £9.00 and should be available in early November.

Chocks away!

Mirrorsoft have *Dynamite Dan* and *Spitfire 40* appearing over the horizon at the end of October.

Dan is an arcade adventure featuring platforms, lifts and wacky hazards. The hero has to foil Dr. Blitzen's plans for world domination by cracking the safe, stealing the plans and making his escape in a blimp. All for £8.95 on cassette.

Spitfire 40 lets you play the Douglas Bader-ish role of a trainee Spitfire pilot in 1940. This flight-simulator-with-combat dares you to work your way up from novice to Group Captain with more decorations than a wedding cake. Could this be your finest hour? It will cost you £9.95 to find out.

Spitfire
40
A FLIGHT SIMULATION PROGRAM
MIRRORSOFT

New Gen, New Blood

New Generation are turning their attention to the Amstrad market with conversions of their existing titles on other machines and the prospect of more original titles next year.

Jonah Barrington's Squash is the first title out and we should have a review in the next issue. It features a 3D view from behind a squash court with two players wacking the ball around while JB calls the score in Reprosound. We haven't heard the speech yet – but you won't need any hardware to get it.

Also on the way is the Trashman series of games starting with Trashman *himself cleaning up the streets of Britain and then moving to* Travel with Trashman *where he cleans up the rest of the world. Those two should be out this year with a, er, threequel due next year as a simultaneous release with the Spectrum title. It's called* Trashman goes Moonlighting *in which the rubbish hero returns to GB to complete his original job but with lots of moonlighting tasks like window cleaning and hedge cutting on the side.*

To hear JB calling the score or Trashman clanging bins will cost you £7.95 on cassette.

Kuma keep coming

Kuma's prodigious range for the Amstrad keeps expanding with their latest ORIGINAL release for the machine being called *Argo Navis* and featuring arcade adventure and shoot-em-up elements.

The game features a 96 screen space ship in which you have to collect 12 crystals. These then have to be taken to the command cabins to activate the self destruct mechanism before you make your escape.

We'll be reviewing the game next month but if you can't wait it will cost you £6.95 on cassette.

Up, Up and Away with Beyond

Beyond are planning a soaraway future for the Amstrad with not just *Spy vs Spy* and *Shadowfire* on the way but *Superman* the game and *Nexus*.

Superman is expected in November and doesn't take the plot of any of the films but involves him in a new battle against the evil Darkseid who is out to take over the world. You can play the part of the blue (or is it red?) underpanted hero or the evil being as they battle to find the anti-life formula that is the key to controlling every person on Earth.

Nexus is another new project expected early next year and features animated action and adventure. It is a game with no rules so that the player has to find out what to do for himself within the basic scenario. It takes a topical view though since you are battling against the evil of drugs issuing from a South American country.

All the Beyond games will fly into your hands for £9.95 each and you can bet they'll be different because as Clive Bailey of Beyond told us "we don't do arcade games."

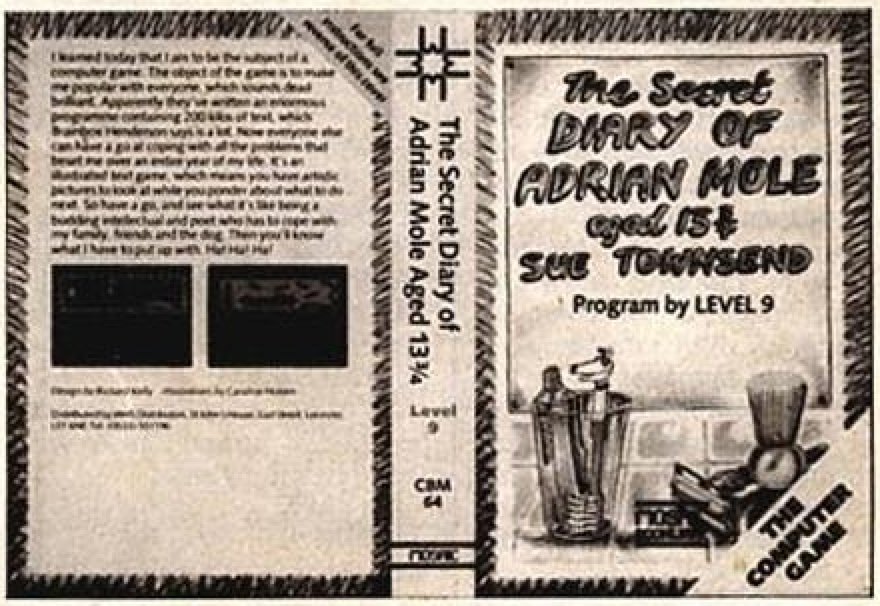
Dogs of War

Novagen's *Mercenary* – the follow-up to their CBM 64 hit *Encounter* – will be appearing on the Amstrad some time in November at £9.95 on cassette.

The game stars a mercenary working on a strange planet's surface. It's a mixture of flight simulator and shoot-'em-up and makes extensive use of vector graphics.

Novagen's Bruce Jordan said that the Amstrad version was 'even more impressive' than the Commodore one and added that the company has 'a commitment to the machine'. But *Encounter* will not be making an appearance on the Arnold.

Mole from Mosaic


The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13¾
Level 9
CBM 64
The Secret DIARY OF ADRIAN MOLE aged 13¾
SUE TOWNSEND
Program by LEVEL 9
THE COMPUTER GAME

Mosaic, who brought you Level 9's *Erik the Viking*, are now bringing out a game based on the mega-best-seller, *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole*. This little package is also from the Level 9 stable, and boasts some attractive graphics. What's more, the text seems to capture the spirit of the book better than either the play or the TV series of the same name. Full review in next month's Adventure pages.

Gargoyle triple treat

Fans of *Dun Darach* will be delighted with the news that Gargoyle are writing a trilogy of games for the Amstrad called *The Siege of Earth Trilogy*. They'll take a more futuristic viewpoint than the previous adventures and star a space-suited hero.

The first game is called *Marsport* with the second and third ones being *Fornax* and *Gath*. *Marsport* will be reviewed in issue three with *Fornax* due for release in January next year and *Gath* in April.

Also on schedule for November is *Sweevo's World* in which Gargoyle have taken a more light hearted view of things with a spin-off from their animated adventures. The game is only £7.95 compared to the £9.95 of the other games.

Virgin works on Shogun

Virgin Software, enjoying an almost unequalled reputation among Amstrad owners thanks to the success of *Sorcery*, are working on two new games titles. *Strangeloop* is another multi-screen arcade-adventure, this time with some 250 locations. You guide a spaceman round a bizarre, derelict robot factory, shooting enemies and trying to solve a number of pretty devious puzzles. Release is due by the end of October.

Nearer Christmas will come *Shogun*, an "icon-driven" adventure based around the cult TV series based around the James Clavell novel. Our martial arts correspondent reports that the game features a number of independent characters, your aim being to get them to comply with your wishes.

'THERE'S SO MUCH HAPPENING'

Elite's commando action

The hit coin-op arcade game *Commando* has become the centre of a legal wrangle between software houses Elite and Alligata. Elite, who obtained the licence for the game, took Alligata to court to prevent them releasing a title called *Who Dares Wins* which, according to Elite, was effectively a copy of *Commando*.

Alligata's Mike Mahoney told us they had now agreed to make alterations to their game – the scenario is being moved from the jungle to a town. Both companies are still planning to produce versions for the Amstrad.

Commando, which features a jungle soldier running riot with machine gun and grenades, is reckoned to be the biggest arcade hit since *Track and Field* and Elite believe it will become one of the best-selling arcade games of the year.

Meanwhile Elite are also pressing ahead with a version of *Scooby Doo* for the Amstrad. Costing £8.95 on cassette and £12.95 on disk (more than the Commodore or Spectrum versions, tsk, tsk) the game features the lovable characters Scooby and Shaggy in what Elite describe as "the first ever computer cartoon". Well, we've heard that one before.

Elite's Steve Wilcox says the player's role is as director of an interactive cartoon. The characters are said to communicate by means of speech bubbles, although no one here can ever remember the real Scooby Doo saying anything other than "Scooby-dooby-doo."

Golden line-up

US Gold have revealed their planned release dates for the Amstrad versions of their top-selling titles. *Raid* is first off – due out a week after this issue hits the news-stands. Next is *Impossible Mission* on November 1st, followed a week later by *Bruce Lee* (you can read an exclusive review of the latter in this issue).

Dambusters, Beach-head II and *Return to Oz* are all due before Christmas with *Winter Games* and *Bounty Bob Strikes Back* coming soon after. Standby for a hot American winter.

Space contraption

The end of October should see the release of *S.P.A.C.E.* and *Contraption* from Audiogenic, both at around £8 on cassette.

S.P.A.C.E. – Space Pilot Advanced Combat Emulator – is a high-tec flight simulator which Audiogenic claim 'will revolutionise the training of our space pilots.'

Contraption is a graphically cute platform game which ICON Software are converting, in conjunction with Audiogenic, from their BBC version. It should feature a total of 20 screens.

Memory Boosters

Expansion cards that will give all CPC Amstrads up to 512K of memory are on the way from German company Datamedia, who hope to have them on the British market well before Christmas.

Technical details are as yet unavailable, but it seems unlikely that the cards will allow 464 and 664 owners to upgrade to 6128 specification. What the extra memory will supply is a potentially huge increase in BASIC storage space, of particular advantage in the designing of screens and animation.

The cards are inserted inside the Amstrad rather than plugging into the back, and begin at 64K. Prices have yet to be established, but if the Deutschmark cost is anything to go by, a 64K card should be around £30 and 512K about £115.

Datamedia have also developed a 5 1/4 inch disc drive for the Amstrad which they expect to be marketing here too. The drive should allow 6128 owners to run a huge range of business programs. No prices are available yet.

6128 adventuring

Level 9 point out to us that their excellent range of adventures can be run on the 6128 by typing in the same instructions that are required for the 664.

For *Colossal Adventure, Adventure Quest, Dungeon Adventure, Snowball* and *Lords of Time, you plug in your tape-recorder, switch on, and enter the following:*

```
|TAPE
MEMORY &2FFF
LOAD
"ADVENTURE",&3000
```

Start the tape and press any key. When the tape has loaded, enter:

```
CALL &3000
```

For *Return to Eden*, Emerald Isle, Red Moon and *The Worm in Paradise* simply enter:

```
|TAPE
RUN""
```

Start the tape and press any key when the computer asks you to.

Naughty Zelda

We are outraged to hear that a planned Amstrad title from Audiogenic is claimed to have a world first for a computer game – a pornographic cover. Never mind the cover, the title is evil enough. It's called *Space Agent Zelda Meets the Bug Eyes*. The mind buggles.

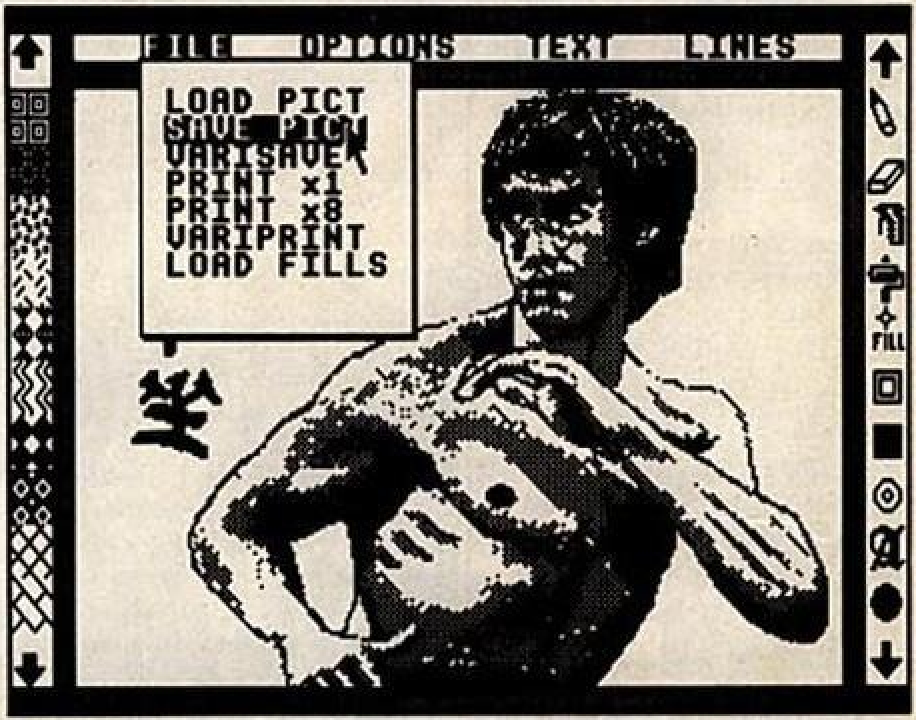
Eek...a Mouse!

The AMX mouse, already a big hit on the BBC micro, is now available for all the Amstrad computers except the 8256.

The mouse is supplied with four programs on cassette and gives art capabilities that AMX are likening to the Macintosh's. It's a very trendy package with icons, pull-down menus, windows and pointers.

The software supplied allows you to create and store pictures using a variety of techniques, utensils and backgrounds. Spray-can mode, for instance, will allow you to behave like a New York graffiti artist while vandalising nothing more than your monitor's screen.

Rodents don't come cheap though – the AMX Mouse plus software will set you back £79.95.



Which one did YOU! visit?

Bit of a mess up over the Amstrad show. Or shows, to be more precise. We're attending (or, by the time you read this, will have attended) the one at London's Novotel. But there also is (was) another show planned for a different site nearby on the same two days, October 5th and 6th.

The confusion stems from the fact that the company originally organising the Novotel show went into liquidation. Database Publications stepped into the breach, but unfortunately so did another company – Editionscheme – made up of former directors of Computer Marketplace.

A messy quarrel between the two resulted in Database scooping the Novotel site and Editionscheme moving to a new site but offering a free bus service from the Novotel to its own show. All in all, a slightly ridiculous situation which, at time of going to press, shows no sign of resolving itself.

So which show turned out to be the REAL show...? Did anything exciting happen at either...? And what was the result of hundreds of Amstrad owners coming into personal contact with the appalling staff who run this magazine...? These and many other questions, provided we survive the exhibition, will be answered next month.

Hitsquad attack at Christmas

Four famous software houses have combined to make a compilation tape for Christmas called "They Sold a Million". Ocean, US Gold, Ultimate and Software Projects have all contributed a program with two of them being specially written for the Amstrad. The tape will be marketed under the specially created "Hitsquad" label.

The four games for the Amstrad are *Beach-Head, Daley Thompson's Decathlon, Jet Set Willy* and *Sabre Wulf. Atic Atac* was originally in the line up instead of *Sabre Wulf* but you can still expect to see the original Ultimate arcade adventure and the latest Spectrum release *Nightshade* in the coming months, although they can't say when.

Surprisingly, *Jet Set Willy* is also being re-written to correspond to the original small version which was the best seller on other micros. This seems crazy, because Arnold owners already have the extended version (known as *Jet Set Willy II* on other micros). Why anyone should want to rewrite a game to make it smaller, easier and less interesting is a mystery to us.

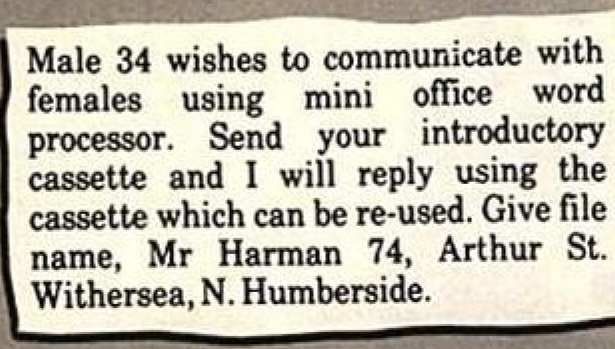
Still, the compilation is good value for money at £9.95 on cassette and £12.95 on disk and between the four games featured on the three machines (there are Spectrum and CBM 64 versions as well) they really have "sold a million."

Modern dating techniques

[/Nice little ad this, spotted in one of our rival magazines. Good to see Amstrad software being used in such a worthy cause.

(PS. If you spot any other snippets anywhere which might appeal to other Amstrad owners why not send them to us...?)

(PPS. If there are any females out there (preferably human) who'd like to communicate with our software editor using pen and paper, well, what are you waiting for...)



Male 34 wishes to communicate with females using mini office word processor. Send your introductory cassette and I will reply using the cassette which can be re-used. Give file name, Mr Harman 74, Arthur St. Withersea, N. Humberside.

Asterisk the Aussie

Not content with taking the market by storm with *Fist*, Melbourne House are planning an even more impressive Autumn schedule. In addition to their adventure releases *Terrormolinos* and *Lord of the Rings* they have games based around that famous gallic fighter Asterisk and a new combat game *Fighting Warrior*.

Fighting Warrior is similar to *Fist* but features two guys battling with swords instead of fists. There's no indication yet of what the Asterisk game will be but knowing what he and his mate Obelisk get up to it should be fun.

Tasword for 6128

Tasman have launched a new improved version of their best-selling word processor Tasword to take advantage of the 6128's spec. The program occupies nearly all the RAM in one bank of memory and stores text in the other 64K.

There are many modifications, but users of previous versions will surely be best pleased with a normal insert mode and instantaneous re-formatting. On earlier versions of *Tasword* the user had to type in the required number of spaces before inserting text. Re-formatting was a lengthy business in which you watched the whole text shoving itself around on screen.

Other major changes are that the main menu does not now appear on overlays, but flips on and off so that there is no need to keep the disc in the drive. The Find and Replace function has been extended and now offers the option of ignoring or taking into account upper and lower case characters.

An interesting inclusion is a Notepad function – four blank pages on the menu where the user can put notes or text to be transfered to the body and vice versa. *Tasword 6128* costs £24.95 on disc and is available now.

Sizzling software dept

Amsoft burns rubber

Among the attractions at a packed Amstrad stand at the PCW show in September was a demo of one of the hot new Amsoft titles *3D Grand Prix*.

Not just another 3D motor-racing game, this. The 3D effect is extremely impressive for a start. Your driver's-eye-view shows the front wheels actually turning, and the road zooming toward you in very realistic manner. A further excellent touch is the provision of views from two wing mirrors. This allows you to see as cars approach you from behind and thereby take suitable action.

It must be said we were hoping to give the program a full review in this issue, but in the end Amsoft weren't able to get a fully-finished version to us in time. Standby for next month.

3D Grand Prix is one of the titles Amstrad are using for a multi-million advertising campaign this autumn. The idea is to show that software on the Arnold is now as good as on any home micro. Other programs being used are *3D Boxing*, another impressive-looking game we hope to review next month, and *3D Stuntrider* reviewed in this issue. All three games are part of Amsoft's new gold range which are being sold in much-improved packaging using mini video cassette boxes.

Vyvyan, you...

The game of the show of *The Young Ones*, from Orpheus, should be on Amstrad screens in mid-October at a price of £7.95 on cassette.

The game features all your favourite creeps from the TV show – Vyvyan, Rick, Mike and Neil. Players of the game have to choose one of the four characters while the computer controls the other three. Characters can speak to each other and speech-bubbles will appear from the animated figures' mouths.

Elite Imminent

Those lovely boys at Firebird and their Torus programmers in Scotland have been slaving away over Amstrad *Elite*. The good news is that it's nearly here and although the BBC original is a year old the game is still high in the charts and shows every sign of being better than ever on the Amstrad.

Latest prediction is that it should be in the shops by November. Hold onto your joysticks because this is where the great space battle begins.

Clever programming corner

The sophisticated mathematical manipulation of something called fractals lies at the heart of two big new titles coming your way from Activision. *Ball Blazer* and *Rescue on Fractalus*, programs originally written by the American company Lucasfilms, have created quite a stir on the Commodore 64 and Atari with their fast-moving 3D graphics. Expect the Amstrad versions November time.

AMSTRAD ACTION HOT 20

Here it is, our first chart of the current top-selling Amstrad titles, as supplied to us by Gallup (to be carefully distinguished from our readers' chart of favourite titles elsewhere in this issue).

It shows Melbourne House still firmly at number one with *Fist*, probably the biggest selling title ever on the Amstrad. Also selling well, and deservedly so, are the four Mastertronic budget releases which are good value in anybody's book.

Arnold owners' taste for lots of different software is evident in the appearance of *Scrabble, Red Arrows, Red Moon* and the still popular *Dun Darach*.

The chart was compiled by Gallup over the four weeks up to 20th September and is now virtually the only sales chart worth looking at. Then again, to see which games YOU actually like turn to Hot Stuff.

1. THE WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST
   Melbourne House
2. FRANK BRUNO'S BOXING
   Elite
3. FINDERS KEEPERS
   Mastertronic
4. CHILLER
   Mastertronic
5. NONTERRAQUEOUS
   Mastertronic
6. SCRABBLE
   Leisure Genius
7. BEACH-HEAD
   US Gold/Amsoft
8. RED ARROWS
   Database
9. LOCOMOTION
   Mastertronic
10. BRIAN JACKS SUPERSTAR CHALLENGE
    Martech
11. STARION
    Melbourne House
12. ALIEN 8
    Ultimate
13. AIRWOLF
    Amsoft/Elite
14. RED MOON
    Level 9
15. DALEY THOMPSON'S DECATHLON
    Ocean
16. A VIEW TO A KILL
    Domark
17. GRAND PRIX RALLY II
    Amsoft/Loriciels
18. DUN DARACH
    Gargoyle
19. PROJECT FUTURE
    Gremlin Graphics
20. SHORT'S FUSE
    Firebird

THE GREAT LINK-UP BEGINS

The telecommunications bandwagon is starting to roll, folks – time to consider linking Arnold to the telephone

"As the Amstrad computers continued their unstoppable expansion throughout the still-divided Europa continent, an event took place (Earthdate: October 1, 1985) whose significance, at the time, was underestimated by many earthlings. A special service was launched allowing Amstrad owners nationwide to link up with each other through the British nation's 'telephone network' (for explanation of this primitive communications system see Vol 22, p1046).

In consequence these fortunate people could receive immediate news of Amstrad-related events, download programs, send messages to each other and access the 300,000 pages of 'Prestel' (a database which at this time was considered extremely large!). It was the launch of this new service which removed the last remaining advantage offered by other more primitive home computers, and thereby cleared the way for Amstrad's world domination and all that that entailed."

Extract from HISTORY OF THE EARTH Vol 23, published by the Alan Sugar Corporation, 3446 AD.

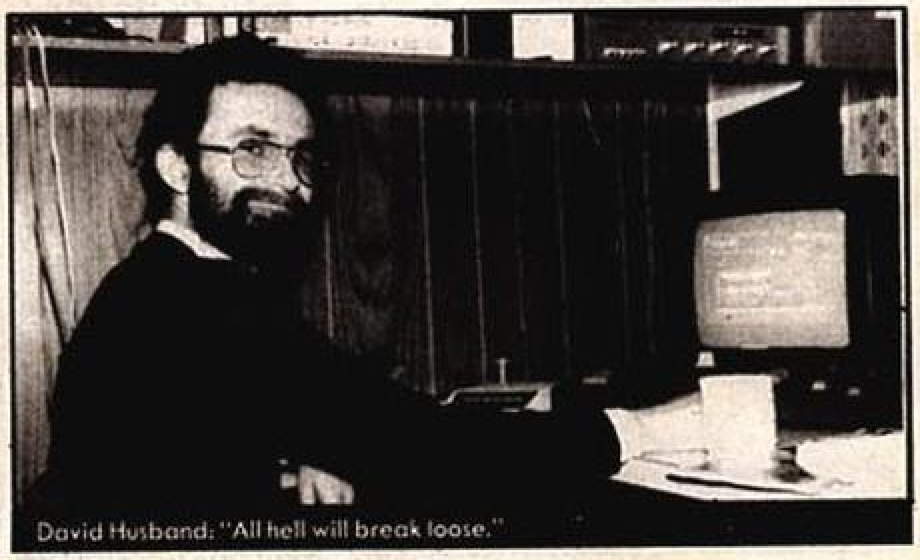
Not quite sure how the above snippet found its way into the Amstrad Action HQ, but it seems to be referring to the October 1st launch of the new Viewfax/Micronet database specially for Amstrad owners, an event whose significance may well have escaped you. For most people the world of computer telecommunications is about as meaningful as a Liberal party political broadcast. Which is a shame, because getting into modems could just be the biggest thing that ever happens to your Amstrad.

Maybe we can help. This Special Feature attempts to explain what it all means, what exactly is on offer in the new database, what you need to get it and how much it's going to cost. Read it with caution. Once the bug bites, it bites hard.

One of the main complaints you hear about home computers is that they're good for games and nothing else. Although in the case of an Amstrad this is a load of cobblers, it's always pleasing to encounter new uses for the machine.

Telecommunications is one such. Indeed there are people who will tell you that it leaves all other uses completely in the shade. Your micro and modem, they will say, offer you an early trip to the 21st century. Instant access to limitless information. Fast, cheap communication. Shopping and banking from your living room. And so on.

That may or may not be so. What is certain is that investing a bit of cash in the right gear will open up a whole new world of possibilities for your machine.



David Husband: "All hell will break loose."

Probably the most interesting is getting access to the new Amstrad database launched at the start of October. By taking out a subscription you are given a unique membership number together with a phone number at a nearby exchange which will allow you to dial up the database at local call rates.

Once you're connected, pages of information comes down the phone line and appear on your monitor screen. By making choices from the various menus offered you select what part of the database you get access to. Among the benefits being promised are:

- ▶ Daily updated news of Amstrad products and software.
- ▶ Direct interaction with other Amstrad owners all over in the country (including us). You can send and receive messages to any other subscriber.
- ▶ Access to software which, if you have the right type of interface, can be downloaded to your machine and saved on tape or disk.

Although the aspects directly related to the Amstrad may be of greatest interest, there is a lot more besides. The database is part of the huge Prestel service and is being run by Viewfax 258 and marketed by Micronet 800. These two companies already supply a vast number of pages on Prestel of interest to computer enthusiasts at large. These for example could allow you to:

- ▶ Try to find a buyer for your discarded Spectrum by leaving a public message on one of the "swop shop" pages.
- ▶ Take part in a nationwide interactive game such as Starnet or Round Britain Race.
- ▶ Design attractive graphics pages and put them on public display.
- ▶ Interview a computer celebrity on the Wednesday evening Celebrtiy Chatline.

HackerSpeak

A plain man's guide to a strange foreign language.

RS232 INTERFACE. A piece of electronics which connects to Arnold's expansion port and allows it to talk to modems and other computers. That's the theory.

AAAAAARRRRRGH!! The sound emitted by a would-be hacker after four hours spent trying to get an RS232 interface to work properly.

MODEM. Stands for MOdulator/DEModulator, geddit? It's a piece of kit with two connections, one to your micro via an RS232 interface, the other to your phone socket. It converts signals from Arnold into a form in which they can be passed through the telephone network and picked up at the other end by another modem.

BAUD. The term used to measure how fast data is transferred by a modem or RS232. 300 baud is equivalent to about 30 characters a second.

DATABASE. An organised store of information held by a computer.

PRESTEL. A huge database run by British Telecom which allows thousands of people all over the country to run up substantial phone bills. They do this by accessing screens of information from a vast library of regularly updated data supplied by companies ranging from travel agents to supermarket chains.

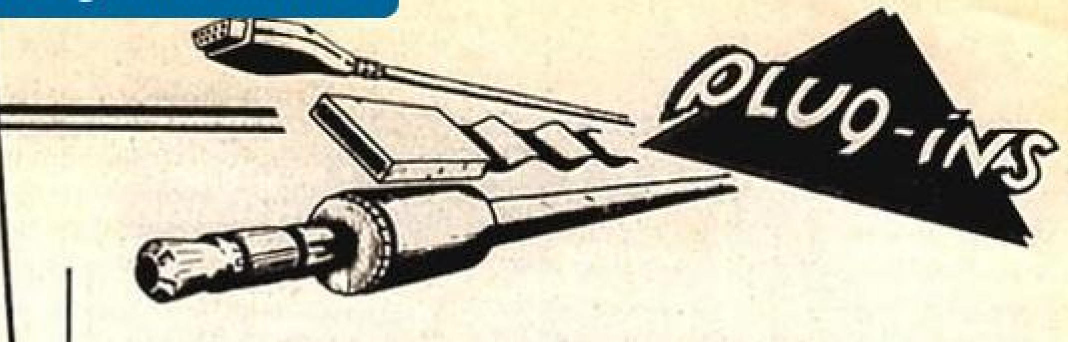
MICRONET and VIEWFAX 258. Two of the companies providing information on Prestel of prime interest to micro owners. Among other things they offer computer-related news, the chance to contact fellow computer freaks, and programs which you can download and save for future use.

TELECOM GOLD. Another BT service, this one aimed mainly at providing communications and telex facilities for businesses.

BULLETIN BOARDS. Information-exchange services run by numerous hobbyists around the country usually on a non-profitmaking basis. Ring em up and get lots of engaged tones.

ELECTRONIC MAIL. A service offered by Prestel, Telecom Gold and many private bulletin boards allowing you to send instant letters down the phone line to anyone else using the same service.

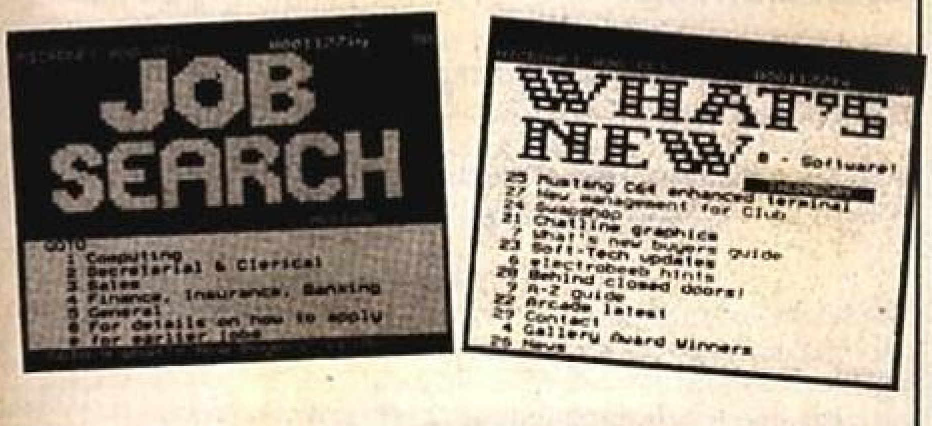
TELESOFTWARE. Software in a form which can be transferred down a telephone line.



Between them Micronet and Viewfax have over 50,000 screens of info on offer. But even that pales in comparison with the main Prestel database of over 300,000 pages. Nosing through it can be a very time-consuming (and not exactly cost-free) process. Here, for example, is a random sequence of entries taken from the Subject index which is part of the 100-page Prestel directory supplied to all users: Careers information, Cargo Handling, Caribbean, Carlisle, Carpets, Cars, Cartridges, Cash registers, Cassettes, Catalogue shopping, Catering services, Cats, Cattle breeding, Cayman Islands, Ceilings.

Many people, especially businessmen, could find Prestel invaluable. And the service is expanding all the time. Already if you open an account with the Bank of Scotland you can organise payments and standing orders from your armchair, as well as have a constant check on your balance and last 100 transactions. Similarly, although so far it's pretty limited, it's possible to order certain goods from your keyboard, paying for them by tapping in your credit card number. One supermarket in the Midlands actually allows people to order their groceries this way – they only have to stir from the armchair to collect the goods at the front door when the delivery van arrives.

Other uses you could put your modem to include accessing one of the rapidly growing number of other databases offering more specialised information, making contact with local computer owners by means of a nearby bulletin board, or transferring files and programs to and from other computers. More sophisticated uses such as hacking into the main computer of the Ministry of Defence in search of Britain's nuclear codes may take a little practice.



```
 1 Computing
 2 Secretarial & Clerical
 3 Sales
 4 Finance, Insurance, Banking
 5 General
 6 For details on how to apply
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25 Mustang C64 enhanced terminal
27 New management for Club
24 Swapshop
21 Chatline graphics
 7 What's new buyers guide
23 Soft-Tech updates
 6 electrobeeb hints
20 Behind closed doors!
 7 A-Z guide
22 Arcade latest
29 Contact
 4 Gallery Award Winners
26 News
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Some of the 50,000 screens on Micronet

But whether it's just for a bit of evening entertainment, or whether you want to take it a lot further, there's little doubt that hooking Arnold to a modem will open the door to a world of mind-boggling potential.

One person who'd go along with that is David Husband of Skywave Software, the man who's developed what is probably the most sophisticated communications interface available for the Amstrad. "I think the current level of interest in computer telecommunications is merely the tip of the iceberg," he told us. "Once the man in the street discovers what he can do with his computer and a telephone, all hell will break loose. It'll be like Beatlemania.

"There's no doubt that it will change the way we live. For example a lot of people will be able to work from home and just communicate with the office by modem. And you'll be able to get all the news and information you need on your screen whenever you want it – I think the writing is on the wall for newspapers. The way we communicate with each other will change – the ordinary guy doesn't yet realise what he can do with electronic mail.

"All it's waiting for is for the public to be aware of it. Until now Amstrad owners have had been in the frustrating position of seeing BBC and Spectrum owners getting a lot of fun out of telecoms, but not being able to take part themselves. Now all that's changing. The Amstrad machines are very good, and we think they deserve good products to allow them to realise their full potential."

How much it costs

First of all the equipment side. You need three things. A modem, an RS232 interface, and software to enable you to use them. Sometimes all three can be bought in a single package, as with the KDS modem or the special package we ourselves are offering in this issue. Alternatively you could buy the Amstrad RS232 interface which includes the relevant software and add the modem of your choice.

However you do it, you're unlikely to get together a workable package for less than £100-£150.

You could use your modem simply to access one of the many privately-run, free-access bulletin boards. But these are unlikely to sustain your interest for too long, and besides, unless you limit yourself to those local to you, you could run up a substantial phone bill on long distance calls.

So before long you will want to subscribe to Prestel's microcomputing service which will allow you access to the Amstrad database as well as the rest of Micronet, Viewfax and Prestel. This costs a total of £16.50 a quarter (£28 for businesses).

In addition you have to pay to access certain pages of the database which are more expensive to update. A typical charge might be 20p. You are always informed of these charges before you actually access the relevant page. Another "optional" cost is the 6p a minute you are charged simply for being on Prestel between 8am and 6pm on weekdays and Saturday mornings. This is one of the two main reasons why hacking is best done at night. The other is your phone bill. One of the big advantages of dialling Prestel is that thanks to a clever networking system, almost everyone can reach it with a local call. If you limit yourself to cheap rate dialling, the cost works out at 40p per hour.

Here then is the checklist of costs:

EQUIPMENT (one-off cost of, say, £130).
MICRONET SUBSCRIPTION (£16.50 per quarter)
SPECIAL PAGE ACCESS (Depends on you. Say £10 a quarter)
CONNECT TIME CHARGE (Nothing if you stick to evenings)
TELEPHONE BILL (1 hour three evenings a week = £15.60 a quarter)

Well, telecomputing certainly isn't free. You could console yourself with the thought that it's cheaper than going down the pub every night, a practice which your purchase of a modem would almost certainly put an end to!

Choosing the gear

Here's a rundown of some of the equipment you could use to put your Amstrad on-line. Before deciding what to get, you'd better decide how seriously you intend to get involved. Cheap equipment with barely adequate features and poor documentation could cause you enormous frustration. Yet it's hardly worth spending two hundred quid on an all-dancing modem package if you only end up using it once a month.

FROM 23

COMMUNICATOR

KDS, £153

Part of the appeal of this package is that there is "nothing else to buy". Although £150 may seem like a lot to risk on a mail order deal, it does getyou an auto-dial modem capable of both the 1200/75 baud mode of operation used by Prestel and the 300/300 baud mode used by many private bulletin boards. That's pretty good going.

On the other hand the package does have certain drawbacks, not least of which is the fact that the modem isn't BT approved. Although after a few weeks' illegal use here at the AAHQ we can report that no one touching it has died of electric shock, it still probably isn't the thing to have around when the telephone engineer calls.

Another limitation is that you can't access the built-in RS232 interface except through the modem. This makes it less flexible than having a separate interface and modem – you can't use it to transfer files to another micro except by going down a phone-line.

If you want to use the modem with Prestel you could also encounter difficulties. On our version the Prestel software was acknowledged to be at an early stage, resulting in a very strange look to certain pages. Certainly you can't use it to download telesoftware, but you can print out Prestel pages.

Sleek black lines of the KDS communicator

However in some ways the software is easier to use than that of the Amstrad interface. Prestel or Bulletin board format can be selected from a menu at the touch of single key. And the autodial facility means that you can simply key in the number on your keyboard. Indeed if you have a programming bent, you could easily write a program which would store the numbers of 50 different bulletin boards and dial them automatically on request. In view of the large number of engaged tones you can get contacting bulletin boards, this might be very useful.

But overall, this package is more likely to appeal to a dedicated hacker than an ordinary user.

GOOD NEWS

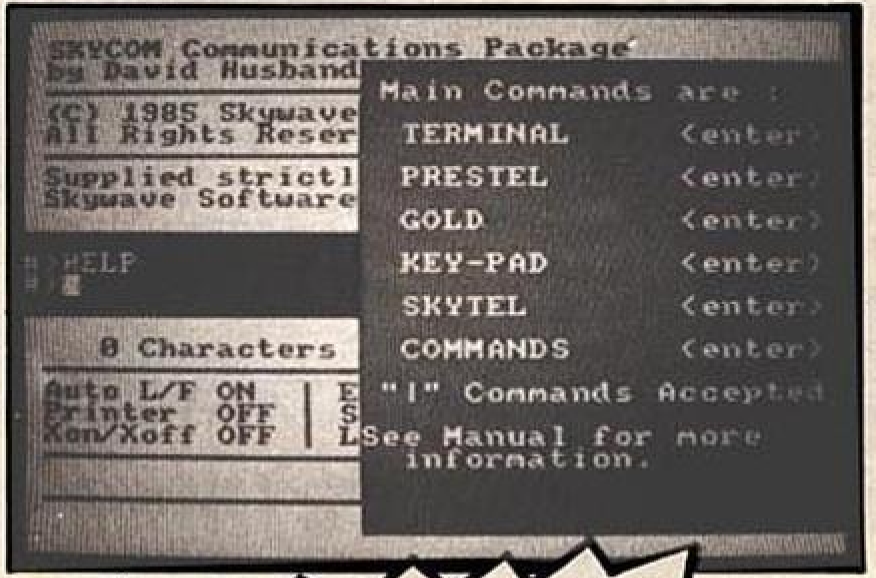
- ► **Offers both 300/300 baud rate and 1200/75.**
- ► **Has auto-dial and auto-answer facilities.**
- ► **Inbuilt ROM software allows easy selection of features.**

BAD NEWS

- ► **Not a BT approved modem.**
- ► **Impossible to use for non-modem RS232 communication.**
- ► **Prestel software on our version in early stage of development.**
- ► **Documentation not very clear.**

MULTI-PORT

Skywave Software, £99.95



```
SKYCOM Communications Package
by David Husband
(C) 1985 Skywave
All Rights Reser
Supplied strictl
Skywave Software
>HELP
>
  0 Characters
Auto L/F ON   | E
Printer  OFF  | S
Xon/Xoff OFF  | L

Main Commands are :
 TERMINAL     <enter>
 PRESTEL      <enter>
 GOLD         <enter>
 KEY-PAD      <enter>
 SKYTEL       <enter>
 COMMANDS     <enter>
"|" Commands Accepted
See Manual for more
 information.
```

Skywave Multi-port special offer!

For details of how you can pick up a complete package of Skywave Multi-port plus modem, turn to page 101.

GOOD NEWS

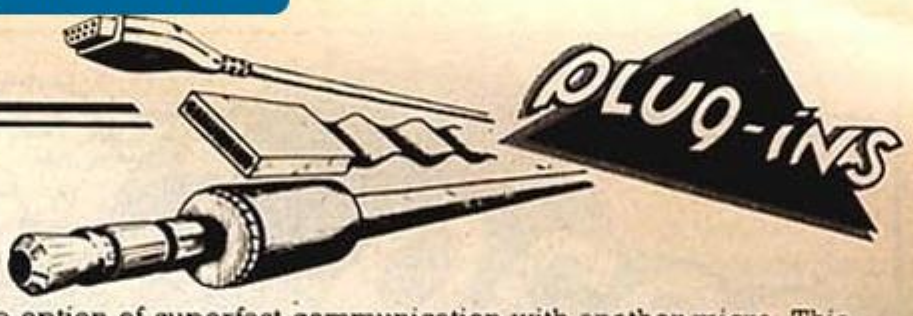
- ► **Includes the most sophisticated communications software available for the Amstrad.**
- ► **Currently the only interface which will download software from Micronet/Viewfax.**
- ► **Reasonably user-friendly – options presented in on-screen menus supported by large manual.**
- ► **Good facilities for storage or printout of data from Prestel or bulletin boards.**
- ► **Comes in different versions each tailor-made for a particular modem.**

BAD NEWS

- ► **Not the cheapest way of getting on line.**
- ► **Only four colours available in Prestel format.**

The Skywave Multi-port interface has one enormous advantage over its competitors – it's been developed directly in conjunction with the launch of the new Amstrad database, and as a result is currently the only equipment capable of down-loading programs from it.

The value of this obviously depends to a large extent on the quality of software available on the database. Judging from the experience of previous databases, the quality is not likely to be all that good in the early stages. But this soon changes as the database takes off.



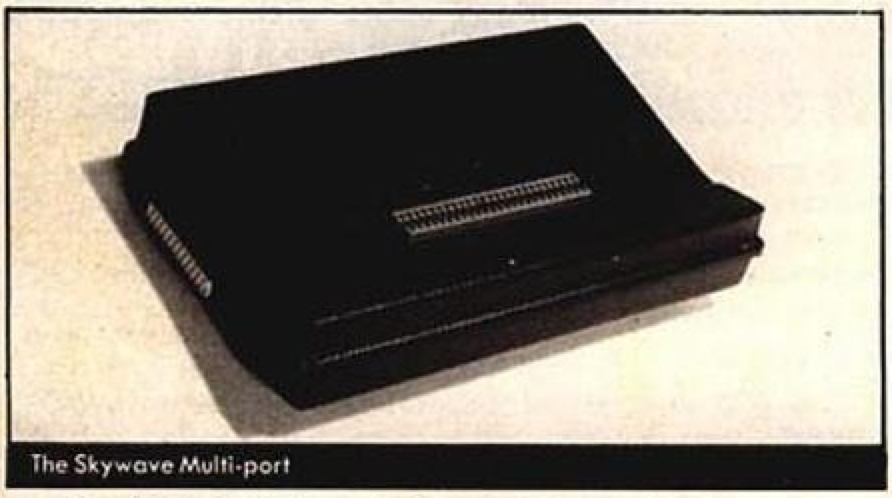
THE GREAT LINK-UP BEGINS

Even if telesoftware isn't your priority, Multi-port's sophistication makes it a very attractive product. What you get for your hundred pounds is more than just an RS232. There's also a 24-bit parallel port and a mini sidways Rom card.

The parallel port is configured the same way as that on the BBC micro, the idea being that you can use it to attach some of the wide range of Beeb add-ons available, especially valuable for anyone who wants to put his Arnold to educational use.

The sideways Rom card has space for just one extra Rom chip – you could use it to run, say, one of the new Rom-based word-processors instead of having to fork out around £30 for a separate add-on.

However the heart of Multi-port is the Skycom software supplied with it (in Rom). This gives you enormous flexibility in the way you use the RS232, especially when it comes to modem use. For example you can arrange for your conversation with a bulletin board to be "spooled" into memory and stored on disk or tape, so that it's available for future reference. A large number of commands are available – if you don't have the manual to hand, the software can prompt you through the use of "pull-down menus".


The Skywave Multi-port

One limitation is that only four on-screen colours are available when contacting Prestel, so certain pages could look a little strange, but at least the text is clear to read.

The interface is being sold packaged with various modems, an arrangement which not only makes the overall price very reasonable, but also allows the software to be amended slightly for each package to make best use of the features of individual modems.

All in all, an excellent piece of kit.

AMSTRAD RS232C

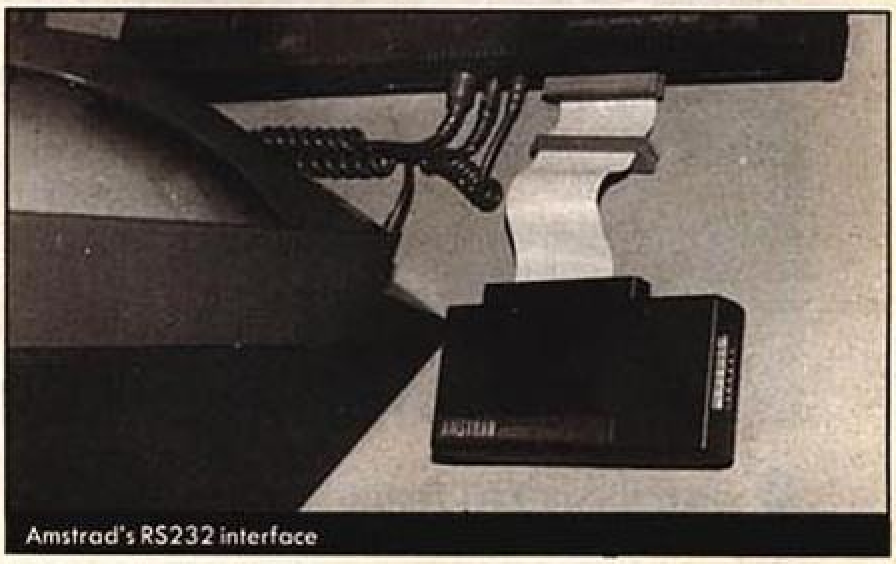
Amstrad, £49.95

This official offering won't in itself allow you to contact Prestel, etc – you'll also need a modem and connecting lead. However the interface does include the relevant software – it comes on a built-in ROM chip, so there's no tedious loading from cassette required.

The software allows more or less the full range of uses of an RS232 interface. Baud rates range from 50 up to 19,200, allowing the option of superfast communication with another micro. This can be done in two ways. "Intelligent" file transfer using the interestingly-named commands BLOW and SUCK invokes built-in routines to check that files haven't been corrupted during transfer. However if the other computer isn't an Amstrad with the same interface, you would first have to type in an equivalent program – listings are given for a Sinclair Spectrum, QL and any CP/M micro. Alternatively you could resort to unintelligent file transfer (commands OUTFILE and INFILE) and just hope no errors creep in.

But when it comes to using the interface with Prestel (and the new Amstrad database), it's a little less satisfactory. For a start you have to set the various baud rates and other bits of RS232 protocol manually before invoking the PRESTEL command.

Secondly the characters which appear on screen in Prestel mode are somewhat hard to read. Amstrad have reduced their resolution deliberately so as to get on screen all the colours used by Prestel – other interfaces limit themselves to the four colours and keep the higher resolution. (BOFFIN NOTE: The Amstrad RS232 uses mode 0 graphics which in normal resolution could only give a 20-column screen. The others use mode 1.) It's a case of swings and roundabouts.


Amstrad's RS232 interface

The most serious limitation is that you cannot use the interface to download the software on offer in the new Amstrad database. Some people would consider that this removes the main point of subscribing in the first place, although if it's just information you're after, it's not too bad a handicap.

Contacting bulletin boards on 300 baud should provide no problem, provided the modem you get can cope with that baud-rate.

One other annoyance is that the interface has its own power supply – and by the time you've also plugged in a modem, there'll be quite a lot of wires flapping round the place, something the Amstrad was supposed to avoid. The manual which accompanies the interface is pretty good as such manuals go, but will still be pretty confusing if this is your first contact with an RS232. As well as a comprehensive explanation of the 30 or so available bar commands, it gives advice on such things as the most appropriate way to wire up a connecting cable.

GOOD NEWS

- **Built in ROM software.**
- **Many options available for transferring files including error checking.**
- **Includes Prestel mode.**
- **Good manual.**

BAD NEWS

- **Separate power supply to plug in.**
- **Can't download telesoftware from Prestel.**
- **Can be complicated to use.**

●

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Programs for money, words and letters scrutinised in the liveliest serious section around

There's a different look to Bizprogs this month. Instead of a major comparison of one kind of software we've given a thorough examination to three different software packages to see what sort of state their in.

***Cashbook Accounts*, from Amsoft, is a small business book-keeping package – just the kind of thing that might be useful here until we get so rich we need a Cray. Small businessman Chris Anderson tots up the plusses and minuses.**

It's that man Anderson again who inspects Superpower's *Mailing List*, on sideways Rom. This program allows the user to build up a database of addresses and then print out labels or carry out searches.

***Easywriter* is an inexpensive word processor from Interceptor. We see if it's as good as the others at the bottom end of the market.**

MAILING LIST

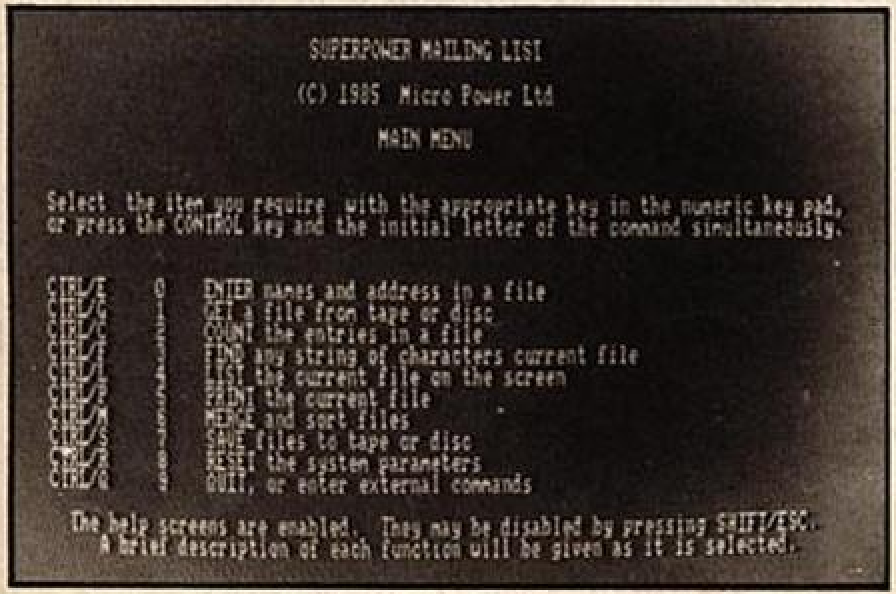
MicroPower £39.95

This program is supplied on "sideways Rom" which goes a long way to explaining its price – it is in fact a fairly simple, though worthy, piece of software.

To run it you need one of the Rom card add-ons with a socket for taking the chip supplied – MicroPower themselves provide one under the name SuperPower.

The purpose of the program is to allow you to keep a file of names and addresses entered under a number of different categories. The file can then be searched for different combinations of categories, and the addresses printed out on labels.

It's designed to handle the mailing list of a club or small business and as such works very well. Entering names and addresses is very easy – you type onto a box the size of the label you'll be printing on, but can add other information about the person outside the label. Up to 20 different categories coded A-T can be specified – things such as month of joining, or age or home town area.



```
                  SUPERPOWER MAILING LIST

                  (C) 1985  Micro Power Ltd

                         MAIN MENU

Select  the item you require  with the appropriate key in the numeric key pad,
or press the CONTROL key and the initial letter of the command simultaneously.

CTRL/E    0    ENTER names and address in a file
CTRL/G    1    GET a file from tape or disc
CTRL/C    2    COUNT the entries in a file
CTRL/F    3    FIND any string of characters current file
CTRL/L    4    LIST the current file on the screen
CTRL/P    5    PRINT the current file
CTRL/M    6    MERGE and sort files
CTRL/S    7    SAVE files to tape or disc
CTRL/R    8    RESET the system parameters
CTRL/Q    9    QUIT, or enter external commands

   The help screens are enabled.  They may be disabled by pressing SHIFT/ESC.
     A brief description of each function will be given as it is selected.
```

The files are automatically sorted into alphabetical order by surname so a search for a particular surname is extremely fast.

About 300 names and addresses can be held in memory at any one time. If your file gets bigger than this it gets split into two and life gets much more complicated.

Probably the main limitation of the program is that it can't be used as part of a mail-merge. It'll print your address labels, but if you're sending letters as well, you can't really use it to print the addresses on the letters themselves. For that type of operation you'd do better to use a word-processor like Tasword, the disk version of which includes a mail-merge program.

But if you just want a program to keep tabs on a couple hundred club members and print out address labels this one works fine.

GOOD NEWS

- ► **A nice easy-to-use piece of software which "loads" instantly.**
- ► **Could prove an invaluable aid to a harrassed club secretary, or businessman with a mailing list for posting out brochures.**
- ► **Easy entry of data, fast searching for combinations of up to 20 categories.**

BAD NEWS

- ► **No substitute for a mail-merge program if you want to send out personalised letters.**
- ► **Becomes complicated to use for lists over about 300 names and addresses.**

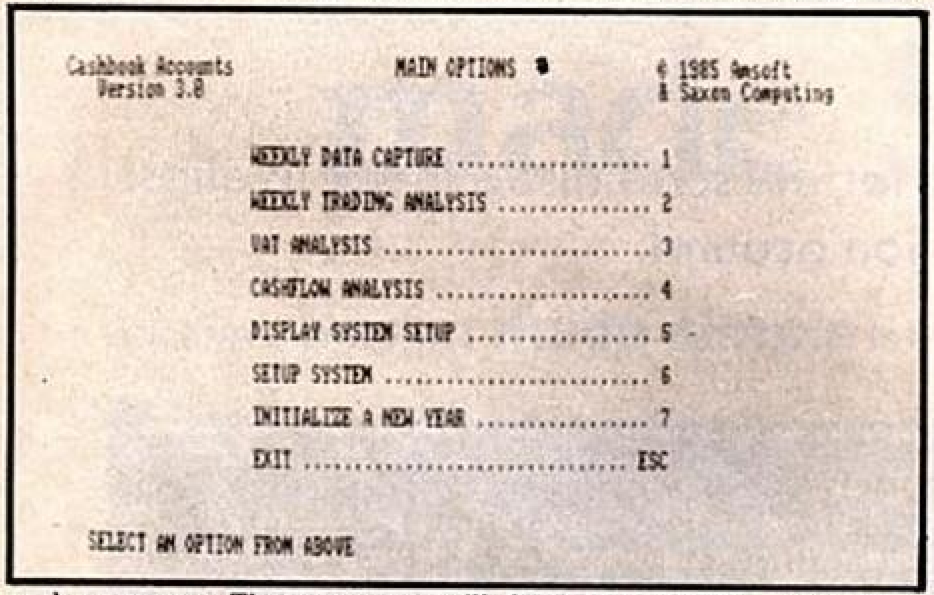
See 28

CASHBOOK ACCOUNTS

Amsoft £33.00

One of the standard uses of a computer is for book-keeping. Unfortunately almost everyone likes to keep their books a different way. It's extremely difficult to write a program which is useful to a large number of different people – that's the main problem with this one. The program was designed for use in a small newsagent-cum-general store. If you own a similar type business you could find it very useful. If not it's unlikely to suit you.

The program allows you to keep a record of weekly takings divided into different VAT groupings. You can also log expenditure together with the category it falls into, and whether it's a cheque or cash payment. The program will then, on request, print out a weekly trading analysis, showing among other things, total VAT on ingoings and outgoings, cash and bank balances, and a list of all payments made. You can also get it to give a cashflow analysis over any number of weeks you specify showing how takings vary from week to week and how your expenditure breaks down. Keep it up for a year, and it should be able to calculate your end of year returns.



```
Cashbook Accounts            MAIN OPTIONS *          © 1985 Amsoft
   Version 3.0                                       & Saxon Computing

                  WEEKLY DATA CAPTURE ..................... 1

                  WEEKLY TRADING ANALYSIS ................. 2

                  VAT ANALYSIS ............................ 3

                  CASHFLOW ANALYSIS ....................... 4

                  DISPLAY SYSTEM SETUP .................... 5

                  SETUP SYSTEM ............................ 6

                  INITIALIZE A NEW YEAR ................... 7

                  EXIT .................................. ESC


   SELECT AN OPTION FROM ABOVE
```

There is a certain amount of flexibility: you can specify your own payment categories, have separate codes for up to four different bank accounts and keep a separate record of your "own goods consumption."

But there are also plenty of limitations, especially if you aren't a small shop-keeper. For example you cannot keep a record of individual payments received, just the entire takings for one day. And every supplier or individual you make a payment to must be referred to by a separate three-letter code – may be no problem for a retailer with few staff and a small number of suppliers, but hopeless for a firm making payments to, say, 50 different companies over the course of a month. Certainly couldn't handle the Amstrad Action accounts, a feature it shares with a prominent member of our staff.

You could also run into serious difficulties if you try to alter such things as VAT categories half way through the year. The program manual warns this will have "unpredictable results".

With a program like this, it's essential to take a long hard look at it before you start relying on it for your accounts. I suspect it will be of use to relatively few people.

G O O D   N E W S

- **It could save an awful lot of time on trad. book-keeping.**
- **Automatically calculates VAT totals and expenditure under different categories.**
- **Reasonably easy to get to grips with.**

B A D   N E W S

- **Really only suitable for a small retailer.**
- **Not much flexibility to adjust the program to your requirements.**

EASYWRITER

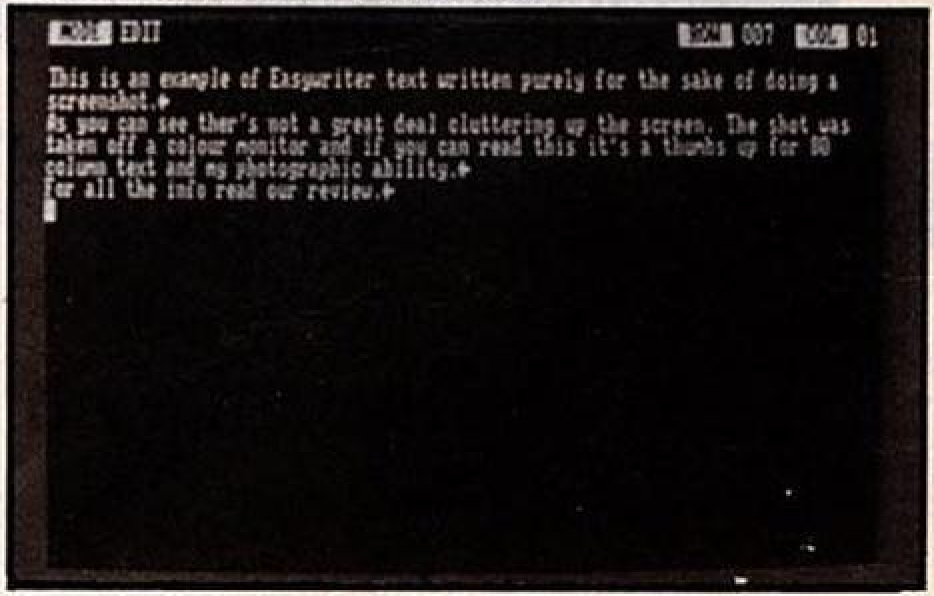
Interceptor, £9.95 cass

Interceptor didn't go wrong when they chose a name for this program. It's easy to use and certainly won't make you bankrupt if you buy it. It won't be much use if you're intending to get down to that huge novel you've been dreaming about for so long, but then Interceptor do say that it's a 'simple correspondance printing program designed for the home user.'

It works in 80 column mode on the principle of what-you-see-is-what-you-get, i.e. the print-out is the same as the screen display. So you start off by setting the margins, determining how much of the page your text will cover. Then you're ready for the off, tapping away and making mistakes. To delete you just move the cursor back to the character before the required cut, and press the delete key – just as in any word processor worth its salt. It's also possible to delete whole lines with one command.

However, if you've left something out you might run into problems. *Easywriter* functions in overwrite mode; if you move the cursor back and type, your new text deletes the old. To add text you have to move the cursor to the required position and press the CLR key for the necessary number of spaces before typing. One way round this problem is to insert a number of empty lines – easily done – type your text and then delete and reformat where necessary. But this is all a bit on the cumbersome side.

Printing out is a simple business, mainly because the program doesn't offer much in the way of options. CTRL F and ENTER will insert a character that forces the printer to move on to the next page, while there is also the choice of single or double linefeed, allowing you to double spaced text. The manual warns that due to some printer/cable combinations the printer will put all the text on one line. In this case, you must choose the Double option, which will produce single spaced text. A little fiddling with the dip switches should sort the problem out.



```
[illegible] EDIT                                             [illegible] 007 [illegible] 01

This is an example of Easywriter text written purely for the sake of doing a
screenshot.+
As you can see ther's not a great deal cluttering up the screen. The shot was
taken off a colour monitor and if you can read this it's a thumbs up for 80
column text and my photographic ability.+
For all the info read our review.+
```

Given the limitations it sets for itself, *Easywriter* is very good value. However, Interceptor are unlucky in having an even better-value competitor in the cheap word-processor stakes. Database's *Mini-Office* contains a program which is not only as easy to use, but considerably more sophisticated, with a good insert mode and more printer options. *Easywriter* really needs a few more features before it can be recommended.

G O O D   N E W S

- **Cheap.**
- **Easy to use.**
- **80 column display.**
- **Saves to disk.**

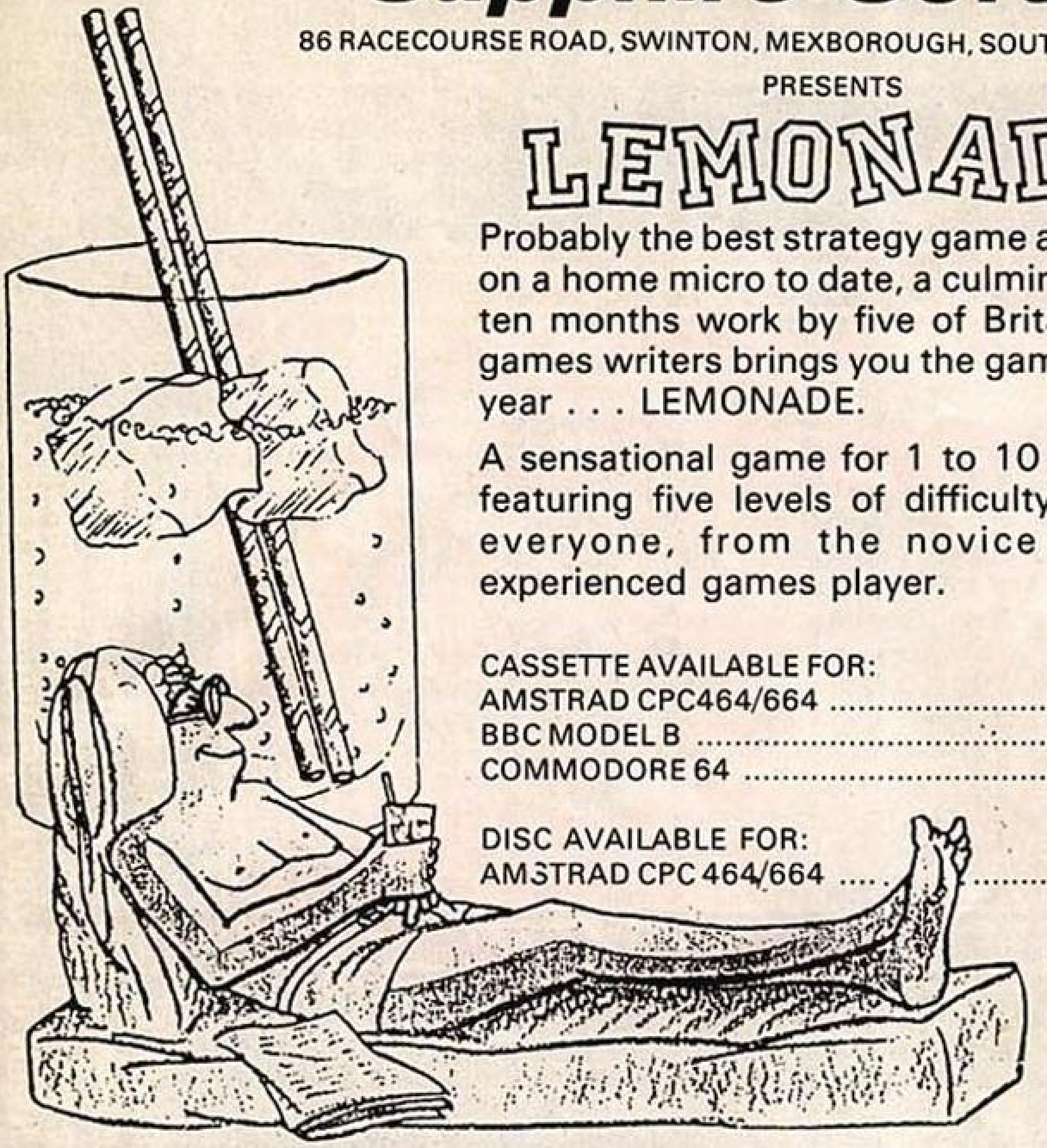
B A D   N E W S

- **Clumsy insert mode.**
- **Few printer options.**
- **Not as cheap or sophisticated as *Mini Office*.**

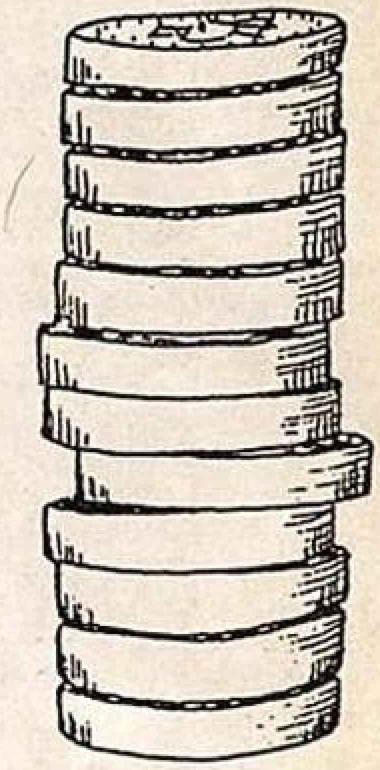
Sapphire Software

86 RACECOURSE ROAD, SWINTON, MEXBOROUGH, SOUTH YORKSHIRE S64 8DR.

PRESENTS



LEMONADE



Probably the best strategy game available on a home micro to date, a culmination of ten months work by five of Britains top games writers brings you the game of the year . . . LEMONADE.

A sensational game for 1 to 10 players, featuring five levels of difficulty to suit everyone, from the novice to the experienced games player.

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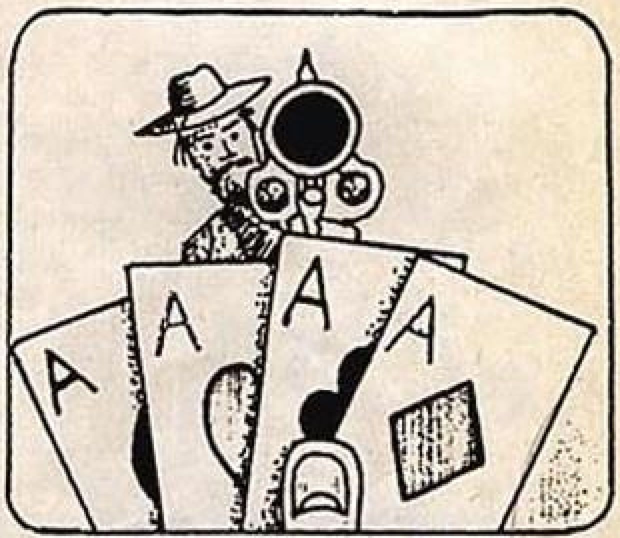
AMSTRAD CPC464/664	**£7.95**
BBC MODEL B	**£7.95**
COMMODORE 64	**£7.95**

DISC AVAILABLE FOR:

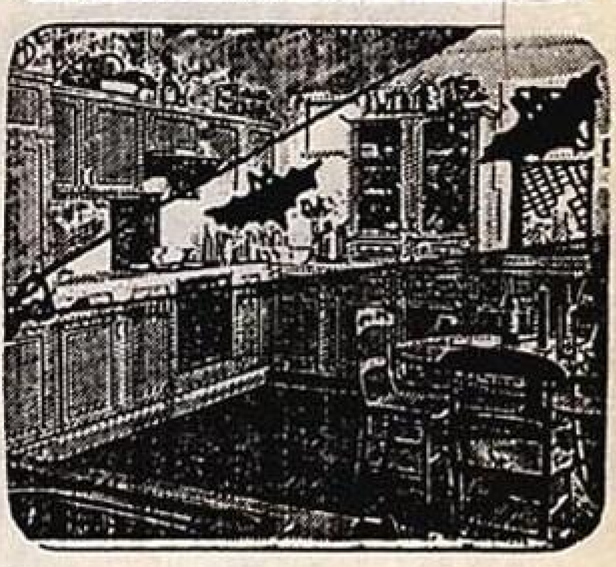
AMSTRAD CPC 464/664	**£9.95**



KLONDIKE GOLD

Howdy partner . . . in this adventure you're after gold, but it's not buried in the desert, no siree bob, no, it's in the bank!

First you have to find the hidden combination to the safe and then execute a daring robbery on the bank, avoiding jail and the noose.



MYSTERY MANSION

Dare you enter the mysterious mansion, 'Nebula', on a quest for a fabulous treasure. Your hunger for wealth and to succeed where others have failed, urges you deeper into the heart of the mansion, where danger lurks around every corner, only your skill and ingenuity can save you now . . .

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BBC MODEL B	**£6.95**

DISC AVAILABLE FOR:

AMSTRAD CPC 464/664	**£9.95**

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ULTIMATE
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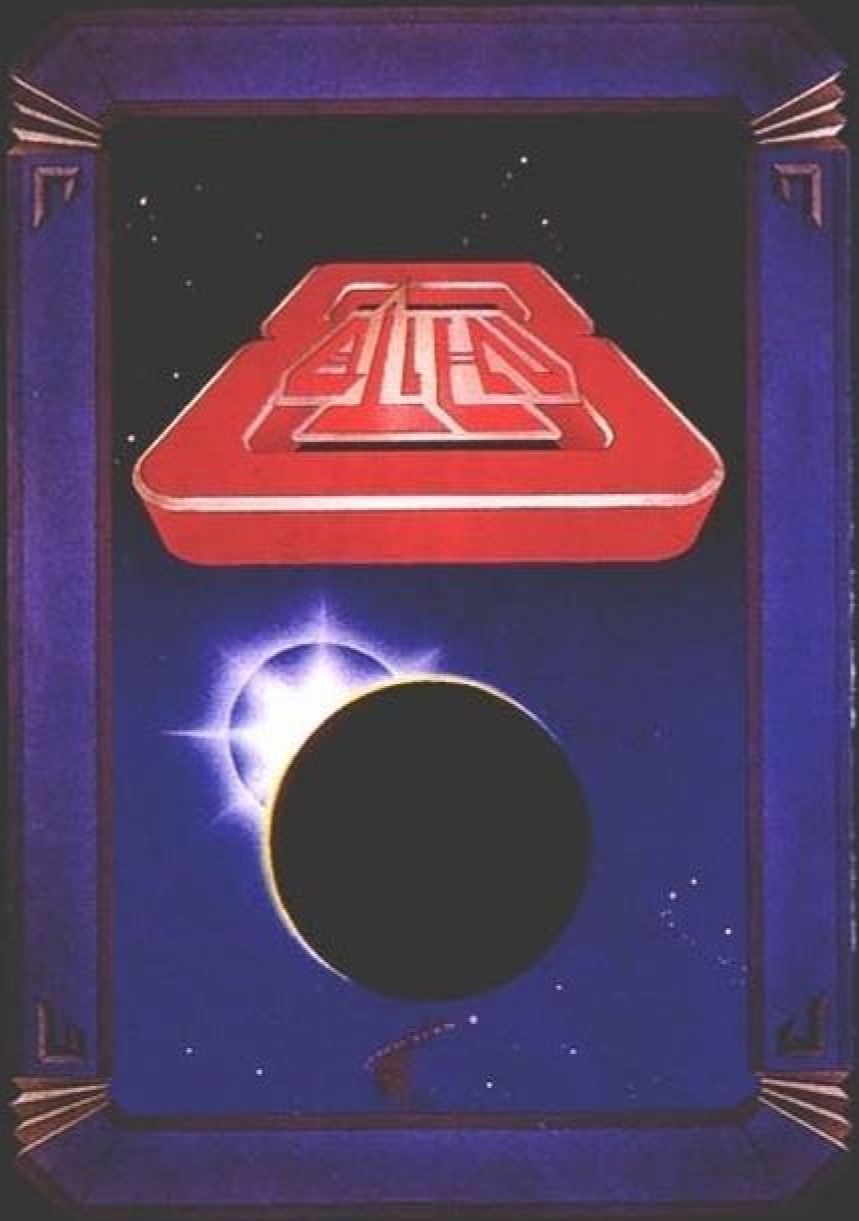
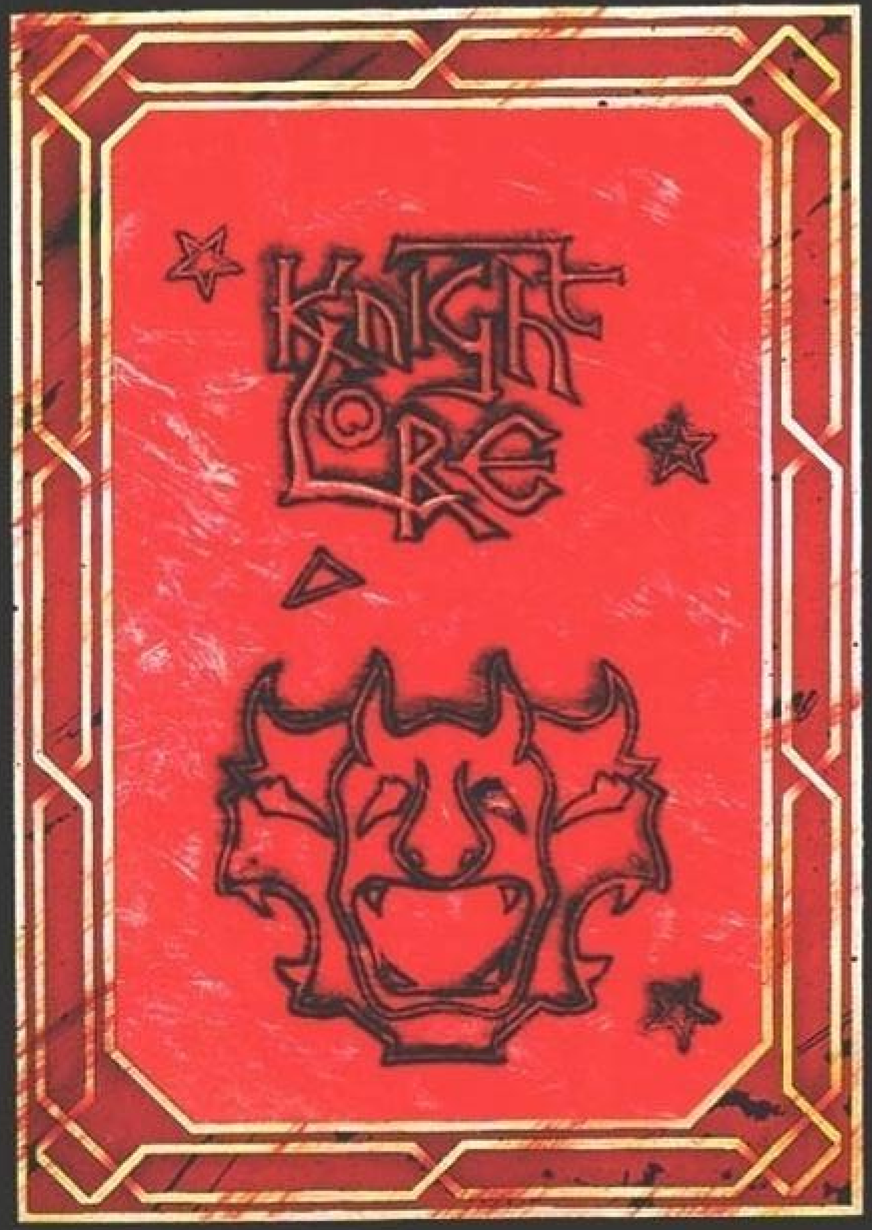
AMSTRAD CPC 464





"ALIEN 8" and "KNIGHTLORE" recommended
retail price £9.95 inc VAT. Available from W.H.SMITHS, BOOTS, J.MENZIES,
WOOLWORTHS and all good software retail outlets. Also available from
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(P&P are included) Tel: 0530 411485

ESP THE PEN THAT LIKES TO SAY YES

ELECTRIC STUDIO PEN

WHILST OUR COMPETITORS MOSTLY SAY NO!

FEATURES/ FUNCTIONS	ESP	dk'tronics	Any Other
SINGLE COMPLETE ON SCREEN MENU	YES	NO	Please compare any other pen package currently available
DRAG SCREEN OBJECTS	YES	NO	
FLIP SCREEN OBJECTS	YES	NO	
CURSOR REMOVAL	YES	NO	
ELASTIC BOXES	YES	YES	
ELASTIC LINE	YES	YES	
ELASTIC TRIANGLE	YES	NO	
ELASTIC ELLIPSE	YES	NO	
ELASTIC DIAMOND	YES	NO	
ELASTIC POLYGON	YES	NO	
ELASTIC HEXAGON	YES	NO	
ELASTIC OCTAGON	YES	NO	
ELASTIC CUBE	YES	NO	
ELASTIC PYRAMID	YES	NO	
CIRCLES	YES	YES	
SOLID CIRCLES	YES	NO	
SOLID BOXES	YES	NO	
SOLID ELLIPSES	YES	NO	
WEDGES	YES	NO	
BEZIER SIMULATIONS	YES	NO	
ZOOM EDIT	YES	YES	
REVERSE/MIRROR IMAGES	YES	NO	
REFERENCE BACKGROUND	YES	NO	
GRID BACKGROUND	YES	NO	
X,Y DISPLAY OPTION	YES	NO	
PAINT FILL	YES	YES	
COLOUR WASHING	YES	NO	
RESIDENT SCREEN DUMP	YES	NO	
3D EDGE PLOTTING	YES	NO	
TEXT	YES	YES	
9 BRUSH SIZES	YES	NO	
18 SPRAY NOZZLES	YES	NO	
4 BASIC TEXTURES	YES	NO	
TEXTURE VARIATION	YES	NO	
XOR TEXTURE SHADING	YES	NO	
RESIDENT SYMBOL/SHAPE FILE	YES	NO	
RESIDENT FLECK PRINT FILE	YES	NO	
26 PAPER COLOURS	YES	NO	
15 COLOUR/TONE PALETTE	YES	NO	
POINT SETTING	YES	YES	
FIXED POINT RAYS	YES	NO	
MIRROR DRAWING	YES	NO	
HOME FUNCTION	YES	NO	
KEY CONTROL NUDGE	YES	YES	
JOYSTICK NUDGE	YES	NO	
AVAILABLE FOR 464	YES	YES	
AVAILABLE FOR 664	YES	?	
MODE 1 & 2 AVAILABLE	YES	?	

DUE TO LACK OF SPACE, WE ARE NOT ABLE TO LIST THE OTHER 20+ FUNCTIONS OUR PEN IS CAPABLE OF.

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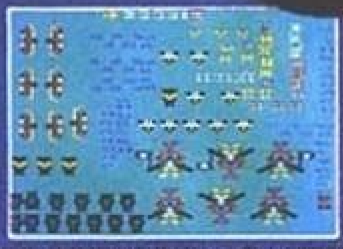
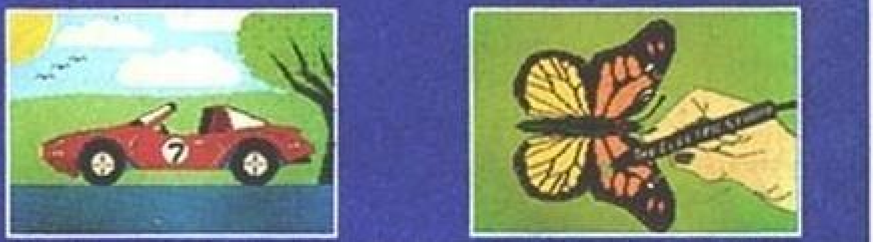
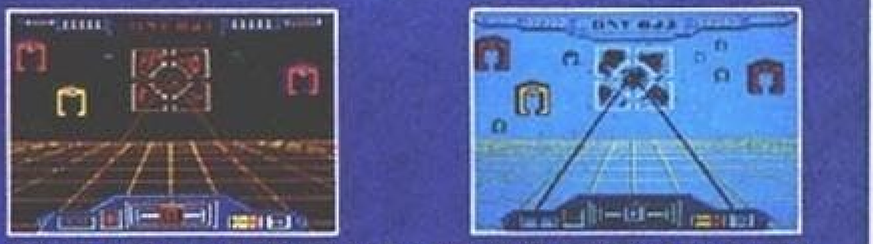


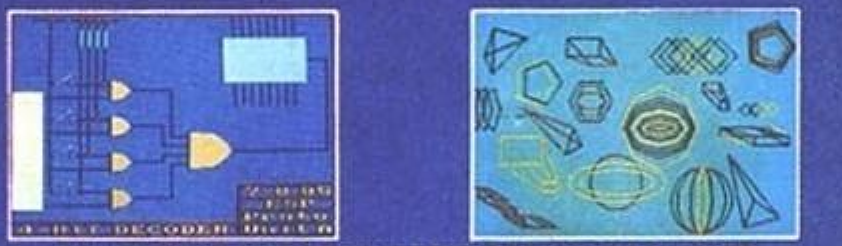
USER DEFINED CHARACTERS



FREEHAND DRAWING WITH THE GRAPHICS PROGRAM



GAME SCREEN DESIGN WITH COLOUR EDITING FACILITY



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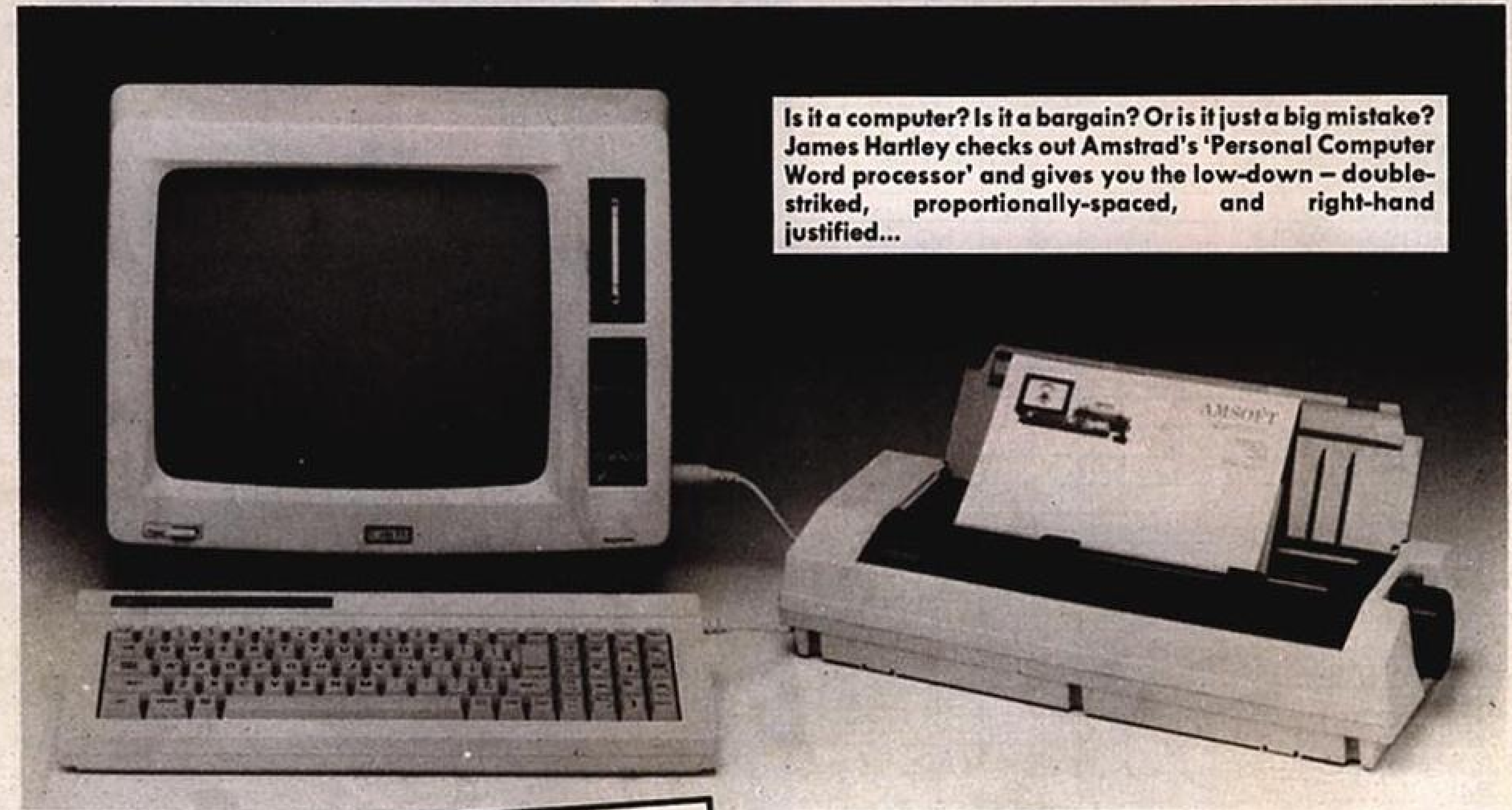
PCW 8256

THE ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEM

Is it a computer? Is it a bargain? Or is it just a big mistake? James Hartley checks out Amstrad's 'Personal Computer Word processor' and gives you the low-down – double-striked, proportionally-spaced, and right-hand justified...



To: Amstrad Action Readers
From: The Reviewer

Dear Readers,

My mother always said I was stupid, but when she saw me using this thing she went out and bought me a dummy. Well, perhaps she's right. Only a dummy would sit up all night slaving away at a rattly keyboard just so that Amstrad Action readers can get the low-down on Mr Sugar's latest creation.

Actually, it's not really that bad, this machine. It has a slightly tacky air to it – especially the keyboard – but I can't agree with the computer buffs who rush around tearing their hair out and saying the software's about as friendly as an uninsulated mains lead. It MIGHT be confusing to a computer buff, but it makes good sense to me because all I've ever tried to write with before is a typewriter.

Ooops! here come the neighbours – I know it's 3am, but I didn't realise the keyboard was THAT noisy!

Yours tappingly,
James Hartley.

Right now, you may be entertaining the sneaking suspicion that perhaps the PCW 8256 machine is more than it appears to be. Perhaps it's not just a word-processor, but a 256K Z80 computer which comes with Logo, Basic, CP/M, a 90 column monitor, a snazzy printer, utility software for a bargain £450. No, surely, it can't be – Amstrad would never release the 6128 with 128K and no printer and then follow it up immediately with a package offering far more for less, would they?

Well, they did do something rather similar with the 664, didn't they? Have they done it again? The short answer is yes... and no. To make matters a little clearer, let's see exactly what you get.

What it is

First, the monitor unit. The PCW comes in one huge great box in which this item takes up the bulk of the space. It's a large 90x25 monochrome unit with a display quality identical to the CPC green screen monitors. There's a single, built-in 3 inch disc drive and space for another to be fitted for £150 or thereabouts.

The system then builds up with a detachable keyboard (of which more later) which attaches to the monitor via a cable that stretches up to about four feet – more than adequate unless you're extremely long-sighted and don't wear glasses. There's also a printer, a fairly small unit that plugs into the monitor via a ribbon cable and power lead. The whole shebang plugs into the wall via a single lead – the usual Amstrad set-up, so no spaghetti problems here.

Inside the machine is 256K of RAM, with 112K configured as a 'RAMdisc'. This means that the machine treats it as a second disc drive, with the added benefit that it is, of course, much faster. However, if you switch the thing off with something in the RAMdisc it isn't going to be there when you've finished your cup of tea and want to come back to it.

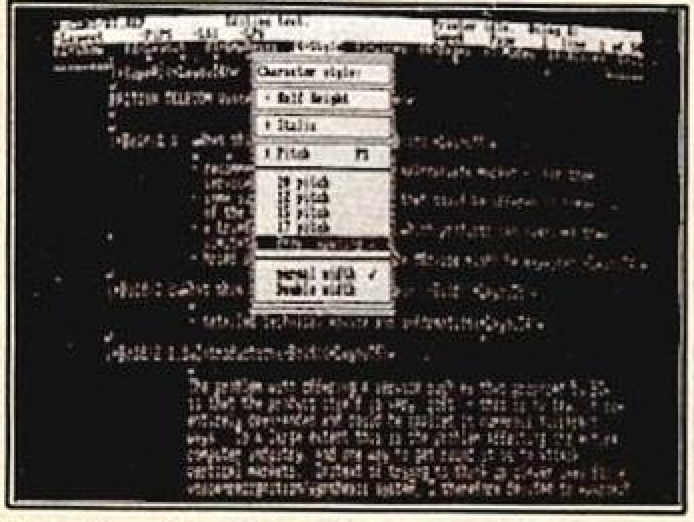
What it does

You get two discs with the machine. Disc 1 has CP/M Plus, BASIC and

Locoscript on it. Disc 2 has Logo and various utilities, including a Help file. When you switch on the machine the screen glares at you blankly until you pop a disc into the drive, whereupon it boots up whatever it finds there.

Since the word-processing software is supposed to be the main feature of the package, let's look at it first.

Constructing and printing out text files using a word processor is basically a combination of entering text, editing it, saving and manipulating (e.g.copying and deleting) files on disc, and printing it. *Locoscript* performs all these operations using pop-down menus, which are called from four function keys – giving eight different options – just to the right of the RETURN key. Their position is slightly aggravating as you can hit them by mistake when going for return or shift, but cancelling a menu is a simple matter of hitting the CANcel key.



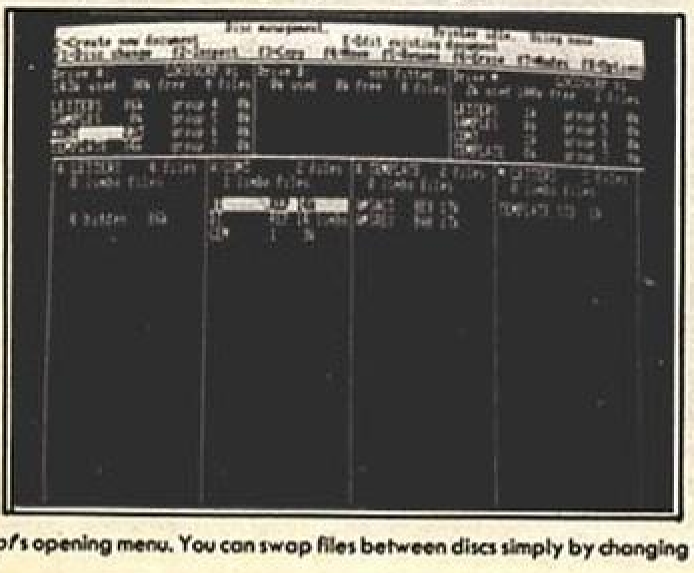
▶ A typical *Locoscript* menu for setting typestyles.

Calling up some menus invokes further sub-menus, and as a general rule the program is friendly and easy to use if you're prepared to work through the manual. Most impressive is the easy labelling of commands, so that by entering a couple of letters you can obviate the need for menus altogether as you become used to the various options.

For example, you can select bold by either pressing f4 and choosing from the menu, or else by simply hitting the | and B keys in succession. If you forget an abbreviation, hitting the | key and waiting a second allows a special prompt menu to appear from which to select an abbreviated command. The big advantage here is that the abbreviations really do make sense and are easy to remember – LT for LayouT, RJ for Right Justify etc.

Text to be cut and pasted and can be assigned to various blocks, numbered 0 to 9, and can be recalled or even saved to disc when required. Disc and file management is particularly easy – the opening menu allows you to swap files between discs simply by moving the cursor from one location to another. File deletion, renaming, and inspection is just as easy. What's more, you get as much as 90K free on a disk for text files even with the system files in place. And of course you can always use the RAMdisc if you want. The best arrangement is to edit text using the RAMdisc – because it's faster – and then transfer the file to floppy when you're finished with it.

There are a number of special filing features. Most useful are the 'Limbo' feature – which arranges for deleted or updated files to be placed in 'limbo', from which they can be recalled if necessary – and the 'group' feature which assigns files to one of eight special categories, to each of which may be assigned a layout template. If, for example, you frequently type invoices then you could design a standard invoice form and assign it to a group. From then on, whenever you create a document in that group, you'll find the screen arranged according to your design.



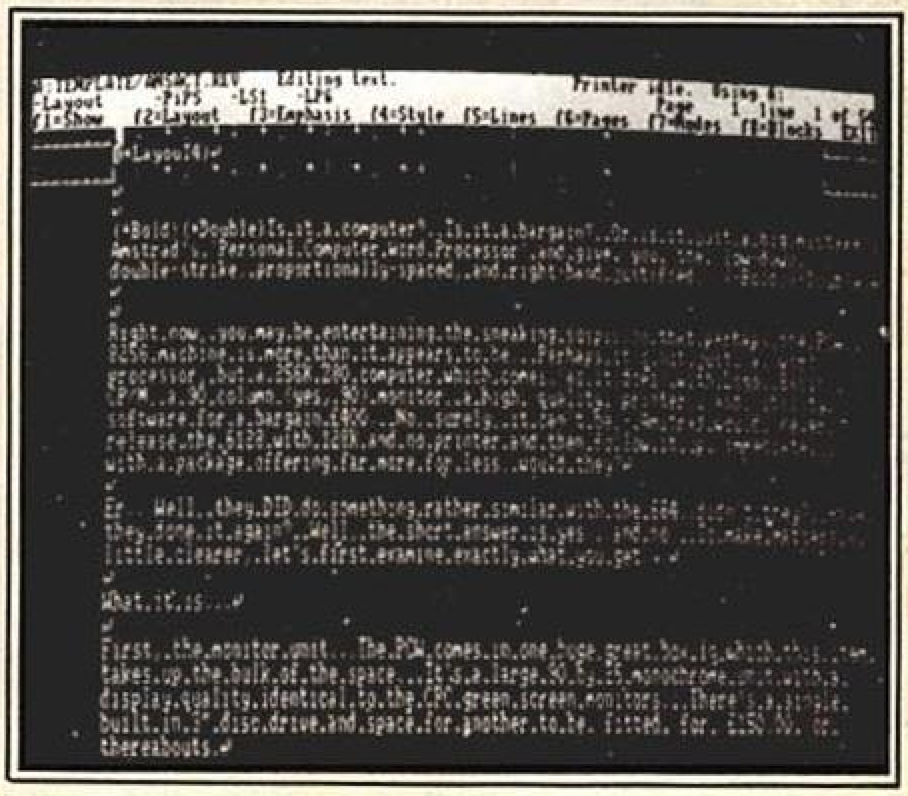
▶ *Locoscript*'s opening menu. You can swap files between discs simply by changing the cursor position.

Actually entering text isn't as pleasant as it could be. The keyboard is cramped because of the addition of the extra dedicated WP keys. The keys themselves are extremely light to the touch and lack positive feedback. What's more, they are quite rattly and typing is a somewhat noisy affair. Having said that, I happen to know that the publisher of this journal thinks the keyboard is pretty cool and an aid to fast typing – maybe he likes people to know when he's typing fast..?

There are a number of keyboard oddities. If you're accustomed to using computers, the provision of both a RETURN and an ENTER key may be confusing. It's quite logical though – RETURN is for carriage returns, and ENTER is for entering or confirming commands. There're also | and - keys, which are used for toggling some of the options within the various menus.

As far as the display is concerned, 90 columns certainly makes a big difference. *Locoscript* is to a certain extent a WYSIWYG (or What You See Is What You Get) word processor, in that page boundaries are marked and unjustified text is displayed in the same layout as it will appear on the paper. However, different typestyles are not shown, except as control codes where they start and finish, and justified text still looks ragged on the screen.

There are, however, a number of display options which include showing control codes, blank space (as a series of dots), spaces (which can be useful when you're laying out tables), and 'effectors', which are basically carriage returns and tab symbols. If you select all these options you get something that looks slightly confusing, but is useful if you need to know exactly what is going on.


Editing text.
Printer idle.
f1=Show f2=Layout f3=Emphasis f4=Style f5=Lines f6=Pages f7=Modes f8=Blocks

▶ The start of this review as it appeared on screen.

I could go on about *Locoscript* for some time. It's a powerful program with all the standard word processing features, is fast in operation, easy to use, and will always let you know what's happening on-screen unless you tell it not to. The best things about it are the way it is dovetailed with the hardware so that, for example, you can control the printer directly while editing a document and can make full use of the extended keyboard – cutting a paragraph, for example, can be done with three rapid keypresses . And, of course, you get a big screen to work with. The 90 columns really do help, and if you want to extend the document width the display will pan accordingly.

The only noticeable omissions are of a word count facility and the lack of any form of document merging. For example, it would appear that you can't set up a standard letter and import data from other files to mailshot different customers. Amstrad, say, however, that the latter deficiency will be rectified in due course. I do have one word of warning to add. This review was written on a PCW 8256, and while preparing it for printing the machine contrived to corrupt irretrievably over 500 words of text. This feature was not mentioned in the manual and its recurrence later (on a much smaller scale) leads me to believe that the software is not 100% de-bugged. The problem appears to arise if you inadvert-

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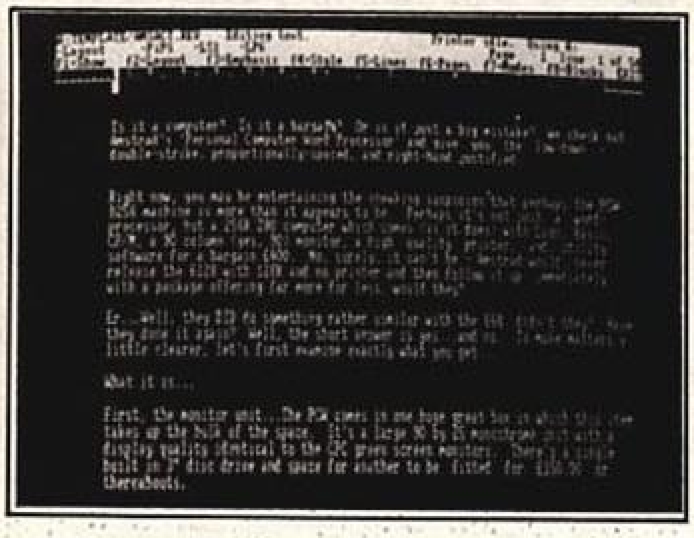
ently press the EXIT key while the program is updating the display or spooling to the printer.



▶ Adding control codes, blank spaces and effectors can produce a more crowded display. Useful for knowing exactly what's going on though.

The Printer

Enough of *Locoscript*. Let's take a look at the printer. This is actually a Seikosha and offers a number of different combinations of typeface while being reasonably quiet in operation. It operates in two modes, letter and draft quality, and in the former it produces an attractive result. Unfortunately this mode is extremely slow, taking over two minutes to type an A4 letter and the printer is by no means robust. If you use high-quality cartridge continuous stationery, you may even find that the stiffness of the paper forces it out of the guides – not very reassuring. The printer comes with a tractor-fed unit which clips on to the top for continuous paper or can be used for A4 single sheets and smaller. The printer will also print graphics, but you'll have to resort to machine code to get the most out of it. Again, the attractive feature of the unit is the way it is designed to mesh with the software – all its functions are controlled via menus from *Locoscript* or direct from Basic. This means that you can really get the best out of it without having to resort to endless control codes while printing documents.

CP/M

CP/M on the 8256 is a more up-to-date version than that originally supplied with the Amstrad disc drives. It's friendlier, easier to use, and has more features. The real advantage here, however, is the 61K area for programs – almost twice what you get on a 464. Couple that with the 90 column screen and you can run some attractive spreadsheet packages, or whatever takes your fancy.

One particularly unusual addition to the package is Digital Research's GSX graphics extension. This is basically a low-level system that a number of commercial packages are designed to work with in the production of graphic displays e.g. bar charts etc. Don't get too excited by it – it's not an environment like GEM – and you'd need to be a competent programmer to get anything out of it. If, however, you're going to be using software that can drive it, it could be a useful addition.

LOGO

It seems a little odd to implement LOGO on a machine ostensibly designed for the 'small business', but you get it anyway. It's pretty similar in scope to the LOGO supplied with the other Amstrad machines, though of course there are no colours to play around with. However, the larger screen enables you to draw even larger pictures than before. LOGO does not, however, seem very happy with the extended keyboard and hitting the wrong keys can produce some interesting hieroglyphics that don't go down very well in your procedures.

LOGO on the PCW isn't very well documented, which is a pity because it's a powerful and interesting language. In common with the versions on other Amstrad machines it's rather slow, but it's nice to have it all the same.

BASIC

The BASIC supplied with the machine is Mallard BASIC, a disc-based version designed to be run from and in conjunction with CP/M. As such it has a number of powerful file-handling commands, but don't expect any flashy graphics or sound commands – there aren't any. However, you do get the old IF THEN ELSEs, WHILE WENDS, and so on. Machine code programmers can use USR to return to values as well as CALL. Since all software is booted from disc, however, there is no firmware to CALL and the documentation is quite high-level. This is not a great machine for hacking on, but if you feel like writing a database or something like that then from the programming point of view perhaps it's what you deserve!

One implication of LOGO's graphics is that there is a bit-mapped screen of some form, but there are certainly no BASIC commands to manipulate it – not even a PLOT command. Such commands were unlikely to be standard in the original version of Mallard BASIC and there seems little reason for extending the language, bearing in mind the intended market.

▶ The 8256's keyboard – a bit rattly, but it does the job.

Mallard BASIC commands

Some of the commands you won't find in Locomotive BASIC but which are provided by Mallard BASIC are listed below.

Filing functions: ADDKEY, ADDREC, BUFFERS, CLOSE (followed by a list of file references), CONSOLIDATE, CREATE, DISPLAY, FETCHKEY$ (fetches a key value from file), FETCHRANK, FETCHREC, FIELD (defines a template for files), FILES, GET, (a record from a random or keyed data file), KILL, LOC (get location in a file), LOCK, LOF (get length of file), SEEKEY (set a position within a file), SEENEXT, SEEKPREV, SEERANK, SEEKREC, SEEKSET, TYPE.

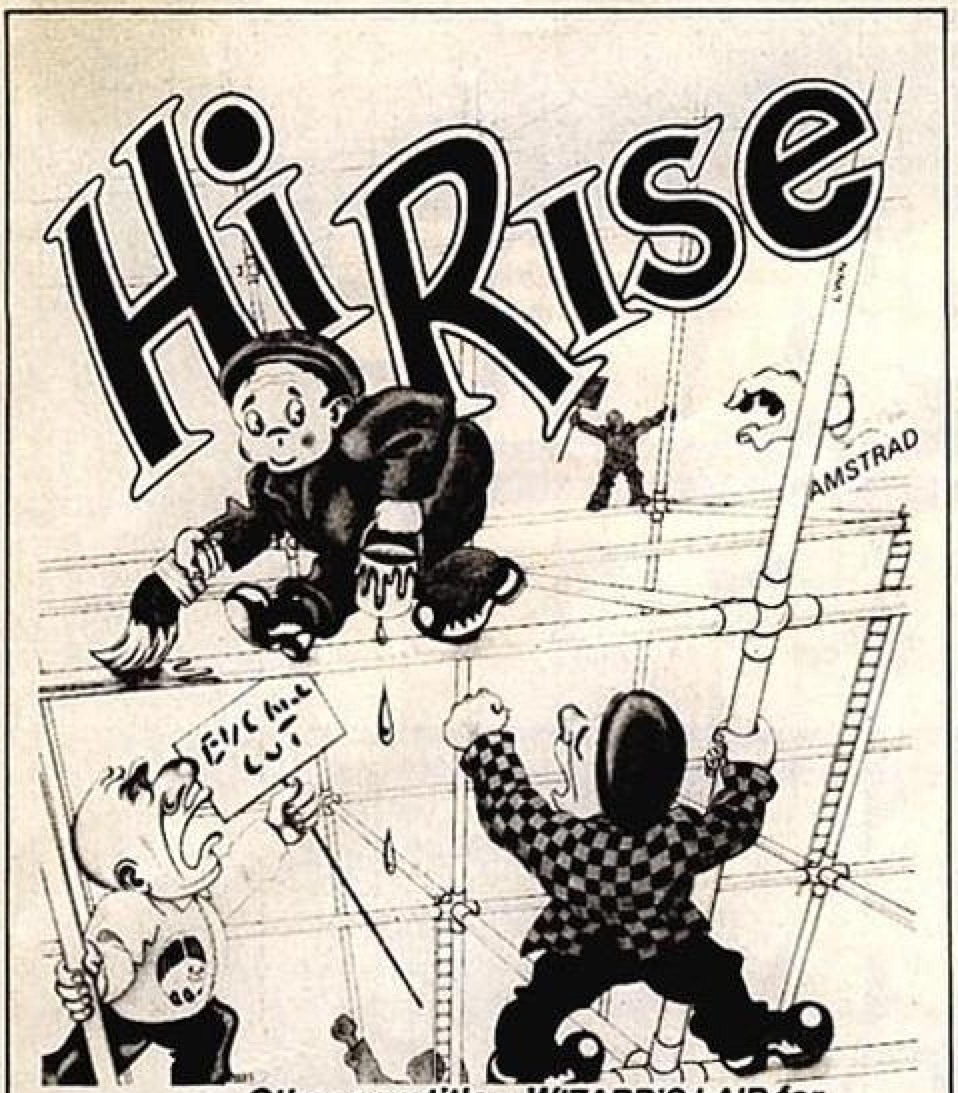
Other interesting titbits include a CHAIN MERGE facility which in conjunction with the COMMON command enables one BASIC program to MERGE and RUN another while passing on variables. This is a potentially very powerful command particularly suited to disc systems which can rapidly load programs in and out of memory. Another oddity is STRIP$, which sets the eighth bit of any character code to zero, converting codes from 128-255 to 0-127.

So, if you won't miss windowing, graphics and soound, Mallard BASIC can offer some powerful features. ●

Should I rush out and buy one?

If you were considering buying an Amstrad 6128 or Commodore 128 as a means of getting a cheap business CP/M computer or word-processor, then the PCW 8256 is undoubtedly a better buy. You get a reasonable monitor, some potentially excellent software and – to all intents and purposes – a free printer. At around £450 this has to be a bargain for a 256K CP/M Plus machine. In addition an expansion interface is promised soon for around £70 giving standard serial and parallel ports for communicating with other devices.

However, if you do plan to get a PCW, you should bear in mind the following: the printer is totally machine dependent and cannot therefore be wired up to anything else unless you're extremely clever, the word processing software does not appear to be 100% reliable in its early versions, and you will never be able to play noisy, colourful games on it. PCW owners may get a bargain, but they're going to feel pretty green every time they flip through the pages of Amstrad Action and see what they're missing.



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12. Noughts and Crosses
13. Royal Rescue
14. Play Your Cards Right
15. Creepy Crawley
16. Hangman
17. Pontoon Bet
18. Thin Ice
19. 3D Maze
20. Colony 9
21. Force Field
22. Solit
23. Tunnel Escape
24. Barrel Jump
25. Trucking
26. Rally 3000
27. Sitting Targ
28. Nemesis
29. Space Ship
30. Jet Flight
31. King's Orb
32. Intruder
33. Inferno
34. Ghosts
35. Submarines
36. Space Base
37. Planets
39. Black Hole
39. Dynamite
40. Timebomb
41. Day at the Races
42. Space Search
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47. Jet Mobile
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49. The Force
50. Exchange

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THE ALL-ACTION REVIEWING SYSTEM

ACTION TEST

For our second issue we've decided to group together all our game reviews into one great and glorious section. This is it, folks, the place to look for everything you ever wanted to know about all the latest software. As a quick flick through will reveal, the standard of games on the Amstrad isgetting hotter by the week. They need a reviewing system of similar quality, and that's what we've tried to come up with.

The easy way to do reviews is just bung someone a tape, ask them to dash off a couple hundred words about it, and print it together with a cassette cover or screen photograph. We think you deserve more. Our reviewing system has the following advantages.

1. EXPERT GAMEPLAY. No game gets written up until it's had a long and thorough test. Take software editor Bob Wade. Despite his tender years (not to mention sore trigger finger), he's pretty deadly with a joystick and happens to have played virtually every Amstrad game ever released. As they say down these parts, BW reaches the parts other reviewers can't touch.

2. EXTRA OPINIONS. It's always dangerous to rely on just one reviewer - tastes vary enormously. So all the games we review get looked at by at least two people, many of them by three. Not only does this mean you can read an additional view under the 'Second opinion' heading, it also means that ourratings are more reliable, because they're arrived at by a process of debate among those concerned.

Incidentally we're now extending this principle even further by seeking out YOUR opinions and ratings on new games. Read the Ed lines page for details of a scheme which will turn our review pages into a living forum of Amstrad owners.

3. LABELLED SCREEN SHOTS. It's obviously important to print screen-shots, but often they can be hard to make sense of. Labelling the different elements can make all the difference (even though the art department kick up an incredible fuss about the extra work - oh, they do.)

4. CLEAR SUMMARIES. Ever read a review where you ended up pretty unsure of the reviewer's overall opinion? To make our own views absolutely clear we include a concise summary of them under the Good news/Bad news headings.

5. RATINGS BOXES. We rate our games using percentages for extra flexibility and precision. And with so many games to work through, it's a help to be able to see at a glance which are good and which aren't. Our ratings boxes do this - just look out for those featuring long bars with dark tips!

So there it is, a state-of-the-art reviewing system specially designed for state-of-the-art Amstrad software - beware of dated, inferior models!

Page after page of sensational game reviews

AA Ratings – how they work – AA Ratings

We've come up with five different headings which, we reckon, cover all that's important about a game. The most important is the final one which represents our overall assessment of it. Games which score 80% or higher earn the much sought after label of AA RAVE, while the highest rated game in any month becomes our MASTERGAME – we go through agonies before selecting that one.

The ratings categories are meant to be fairly self-explanatory, but that wasn't why we didn't print anything about them last issue – we just ran out of space! So here are the missing explanations. Hopefully you'll agree our categories make a refreshing change from the usual.

GRAPHICS is the first category. Basically, this means..er..what the game looks like; colour, definition, animation, imagination. It's safe to say that monochrome Noughts and Crosses will score fairly low.

SONICS next. Sweet music, horrible noise, silence, all will be rated on quality and quantity. This rating involves the use of ears.

GRAB FACTOR We think you'll like this one. Does the game really GRAB you? Are you hooked? Will you miss an episode of The Archers to play it? High Grab Factor means that the whole office abandons work, Bob Wade whoops with delight and even the publisher looks mildly pleased. 100% means the game is more addictive than cider.

STAYING POWER You may have got the habit, but how long are you going to keep it? Staying Power tells you how often you're likely to return to a game. That depends on such matters as the number of screens and levels, the variety of the task, the degree of long-term challenge. An addictive game with only a couple of screens to it will get a high Grab Factor and low Staying Power, one with a 1000-screen playing area but lacking in playability would be the other way round.

AA RATING Nothing to do with cars. This is the result of a very hard sum involving all the other ratings, plus factors like price, quality of packaging and instructions, reliability and any other relevant factors we can think of. You won't go far wrong with any game over 80%.

MASTERGAME

Highway Encounter 54

AA RAVES

Bruce Lee 52
Devil's Crown 62
Dragontorc 38
Match Day 64
Raid 64
Southern Belle 52
Starion 72
The Covenant 46
Wizard's Lair 38

GAMES TESTED

Android Two 48
Brian Bloodaxe 50
Brian Jack's Superstar Challenge 41
Code Name Mat II 47
Doppleganger 60
Formula One 74
Hacker 67
Juggernaut 48
Macadam Bumper 42
Master of the Lamps 41
On the Run 68
Paws 76
Project Future 49
Rocco 74
Screenplay 59
Slapshot 67
Sub Stryker 73
Super Sam 75
3D Stuntrider 73
Trivia 59
Vagan Attack 60
Value Pack 60
View to a Kill 77

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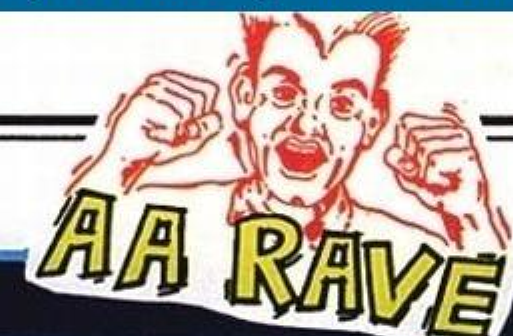


WIZARD'S LAIR

Bubble Bus, £6.99 cass, joystick or keys

This intriguing exploration game sets you the task of finding four pieces of a golden lion in a massive underground cave complex. The complex is made up of rooms and passages packed with dangers and objects.

Each room is viewed from above with four walls sloping down. In the walls are doorways which swing open and closed. There are also other features on the room floors like pools, rivers, snakes, wells and tiger rugs. These don't do anything but can get in your way when trying to get through a room fast.

Cryptic Object Guide

Wings: act like Hermes.
Crosses: don't walk on water but walk on ...shhhh!
Rings: not engagement but they'll carry you over a threshold.
Diamonds: like rings, only different.
Magic Lifts: know the seven or out you go.
Skulls: no crossbones but worse than pirates.
Wardrobe: yo-yo fashion.

There are seven levels and several different room settings like jungles, rocky caves and mansion rooms. There are various methods of getting between rooms and levels, which may be concealed. There are wardrobes and magic lifts to get between levels as well as trapdoors to descend them and ladders that connect to doors. These connections have to be discovered by trial and error and as well as these there are hidden doorways that may be in pieces of furniture or scenery and only identifiable when a creature pops out of one.

There are lots of different creatures that whizz around the rooms – contact with them will sap your energy or kill you outright. Sword-carrying knights and axe-wielding executioners kill on contact but like all creatures can be dispatched with the weapons found lying around. You throw axes that bounce around the screen, the only problem being that you have a limited supply and can run out, leaving you helpless.

Energy can be replaced by picking up food and drink that appears in the shape of apples, pineapples, milkshakes and so on. Other objects have other effects like opening doors, giving you immunity, extra lives or killing you. There are lots of them including keys, gold, armour, wings, crosses, rings, diamonds and spells. Spells only operate if you're carrying gold but give you the chance to obtain bonus keys, rings, diamonds, energy or weapons.

SECOND OPINION

Despite repeated efforts I didn't manage to complete more than 10% of the game. It's big, and not at all easy. There's a good variety of opponents, lthough I found the constant assault a little wearisome. And those executioners are mean.

PC

The objects all have a specific purpose which you have to discover. And who am I to spoil your fun? Suffice to say that some objects' purposes are obvious and opening doors is a function of several objects.

DRAGONTORC

Hewson Consultants, £7.95, joystick or keys

Like *Dun Darach* this has been called an adventure movie because it combines the puzzling of adventures with sophisticated animation and lots of locations. Its predecessor *Avalon* hasn't been converted for the Amstrad but this is an impressive opener for Maroc the Mage in his fight to get the five crowns of Britain. Along the way he faces constant danger, not least from his arch-enemy Morag the Shapeshifter.

The game is composed of many locations which vary from forests to vaults but all take the same basic format. This is a 3D perspective with you viewing through one 'wall' and two others tapering to join a third at the back. In these three sections appear the exits to other screens in the form of doors or forest tracks. Maroc never actually moves but you control a projection of him (perhaps that's why it flickers) with which all the tasks have to be completed.

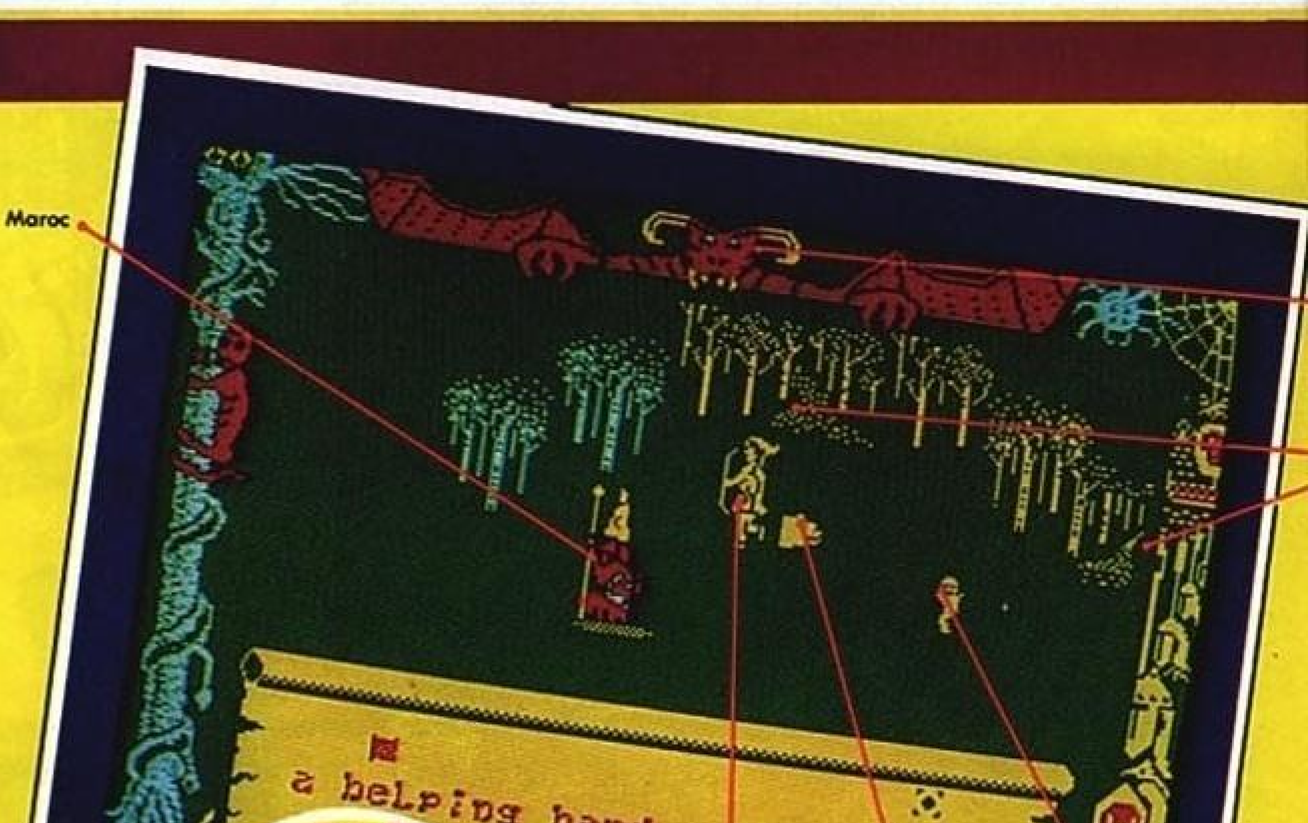
SECOND OPINION

There's such a strong adventure element in this game that those in search of more rapid gratification could find themselves asking questions like 'What on earth am I supposed to do?' followed by 'And how am I supposed to do it?' But it's worth perservering. The graphics, despite that flicker, are very imaginative, the puzzles are intriguing and the whole thing will keep you going through many a long winter night.

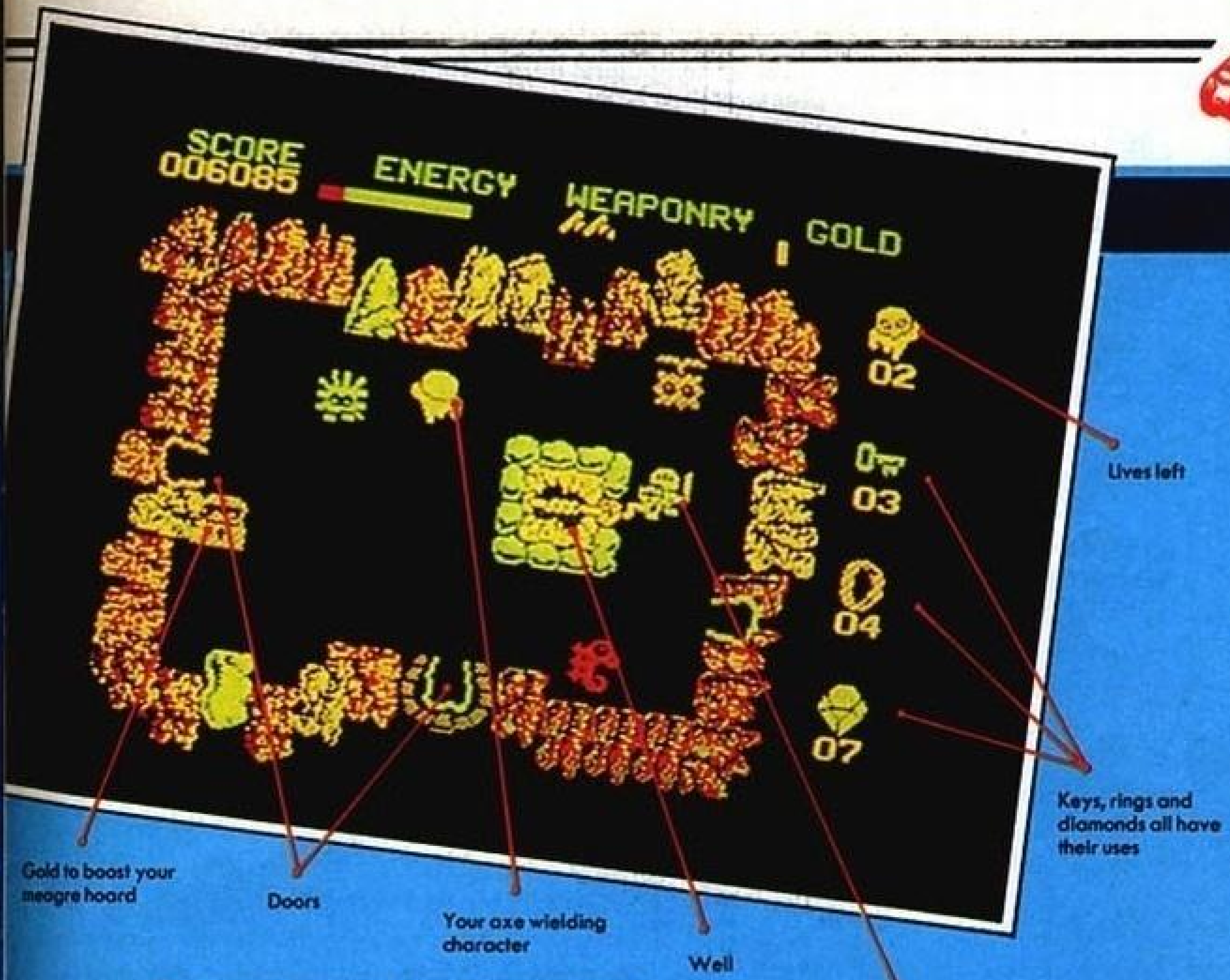
PC

You can only travel around using a move spell which causes you to hover just off the ground giving you control in all directions. You can now get from place to place by moving 'into' a pathway or bumping a door open and then passing through it.

On your travels you encounter many strange beasts and lots of objects. All of the characters are supposed to have 'sensory animation' but this merely means that they react differently to you depending on what you do to them. The first things you'll encounter are elves and wisps, the former being timid but prepared to trade and the latter being much more hostile.



Many of the inhabitants and static objects will drain Maroc's energy, which is represented by a flame in the status screen at the bottom of the screen. This screen also displays the spells that you can pick up and use. These are on a vertically scrolling menu and every time you gain a new magic power the spell appears on the list. To inform you of your acquisition the eyes of a demon at the top of the screen flash. Be careful, though, since some spells can only be used a limited number of times.


SCORE
006085
ENERGY
WEAPONRY
GOLD
02
03
04
07
Lives left
Keys, rings and diamonds all have their uses
Gold to boost your meagre hoard
Doors
Your axe wielding character
Well
A deadly knight

The room graphics and characters are bright with reasonable sound effects. The game itself becomes one of frantic exploration as you charge around rooms searching for objects and blasting beasties.

BW

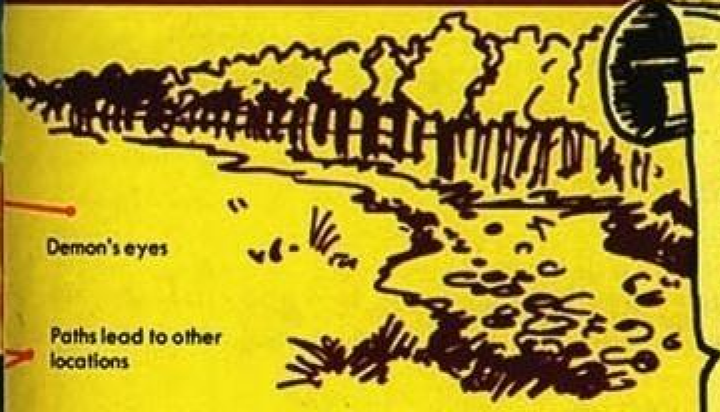
GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **256 screens to explore.**
- ▶ **Stacks of objects and creatures.**
- ▶ **Brainwork required for some objects.**
- ▶ **Nice features like lifts, trap doors and spells.**
- ▶ **Very colourful and detailed screens and objects.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **It's possible to get trapped with no exit.**
- ▶ **Not easy to spot a deadly knight or executioner amongst other creatures.**

GRAPHICS	84%
SONICS	68%
GRAB FACTOR	83%
STAYING POWER	82%
A A RATING	82%


Demon's eyes
Paths lead to other locations

Objects can be picked up and activated by using Maroc or his faithful spirit-like servant. Maroc just has to pass over something to pick it up and if it's a spell he can then activate it. Non-magical items need to be used by the servant who can take things out of Maroc's backpack and use, drop or swap them.

If you have too many run-ins with the nasties and exhaust your energy you're returned to the starting position (or the entrance to an area if you've completed the first section) with all your possessions dropped where you died. Energy can be replenished either with a spell or by using the mystical leylines. These are pathways that Maroc has to fly down *Pole Position*-style meeting energy-providing or energy-sapping objects on the way.

Once you've got the hang of getting around you can start investigating the many problems that have to be solved. There are over 250 locations and most contain something of interest. You're bound to have difficulties cracking sections of the game but the instructions contain some handy hints and the general style of solutions soon becomes familiar.

In Wispwood, your starting location, the main aim is to find the Leyrod which is concealed below in the vaults of Locris. With this you can reveal leycubes at stone circles and travel to several other areas. Early on it is worth searching everything with the servant since he can trade with elves, recover a gem from the pool and move stone slabs with Merlyn's seal.

All problems work in a sort of progression so that you'll need one object to get another and so on. These will eventually lead to the crowns and Merlyn. One general tip is to be logical – i.e. keys open chests and doors, runes and symbols may fit into or onto things, and containers, like the chalice, are for carrying and depositing things.

BW

The Spell Scroll

Here's the list of different spells which can be used. Most you will first have to locate and pick up before they become available.

ME: for general movement and leylines.
SERVANT: pick up and use objects and open or close doors.
BANE: kills wisps, wraiths and eyes. Remember to turn it off quickly.
WALL: Protects you against axes and imp missiles.
UNDO: removes magical curses.
MISSILE: kills most creatures except werewolves and imps.
ENERGISE: replenishes your energy.
DETECT: reveals invisible goblins in Morag's citadel.
UNSEEN: makes you invisible to homing missiles and people – not animals.
MINDKEY: Opens doors and releases Merlyn.
LIGHT: useful in black or dark blue rooms and when blinded.
SLOW: slows magic, animals and people and should be saved for dangerous occasions.
WARRIOR: Kills those nasty werewolves and imps.
RETURN: takes you to Halgor's tomb – use very sparingly since there isn't much.
LEYROD: reveals leycubes (leylines) and gets you out of doorless room.
LOCATE: finds hidden chest in sanctuary.
DEMON: use only against demonhead in Hellsmouth or it kills you.
MANTLE: protects you against many dangers – remember to turn it off.
HEAL: heals handicaps like blindness and lameness.

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Over 250 atmospheric locations.**
- ▶ **Impressive 3D effect as you move around.**
- ▶ **Many complicated tasks to complete.**
- ▶ **Lots of other characters to interact with.**
- ▶ **Plenty of imagination in the problems, scenario and spells.**
- ▶ **Very rewarding when you crack a problem – a real adventure.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Graphics can be quite flickery.**
- ▶ **Navigating through doorways can get frustrating.**
- ▶ **No quick rewards – you'll have to really work at it.**

GRAPHICS	82%
SONICS	28%
GRAB FACTOR	81%
STAYING POWER	95%
A A RATING	86%

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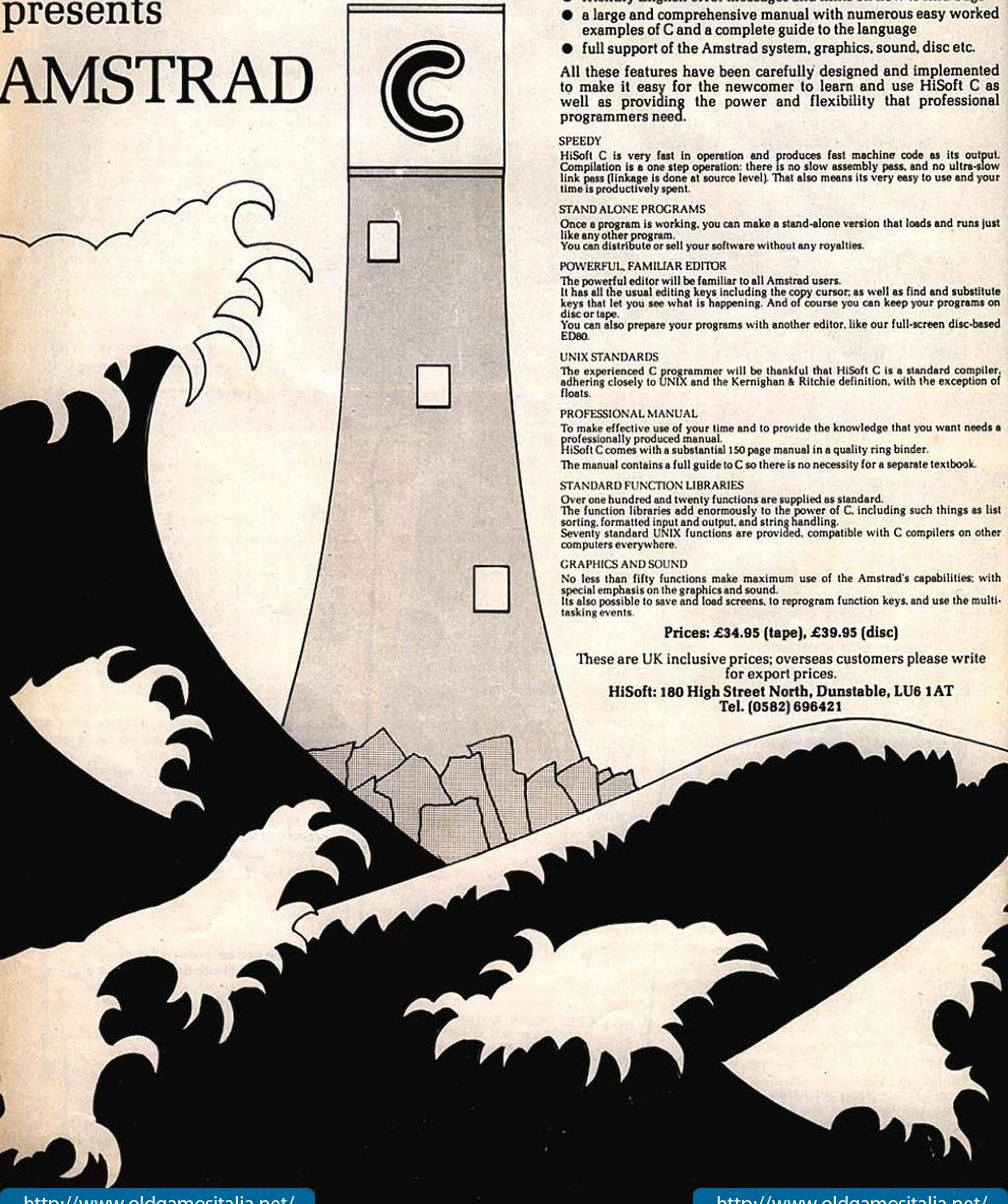


MASTER OF THE LAMPS

Activision, £9.99, joystick or keys

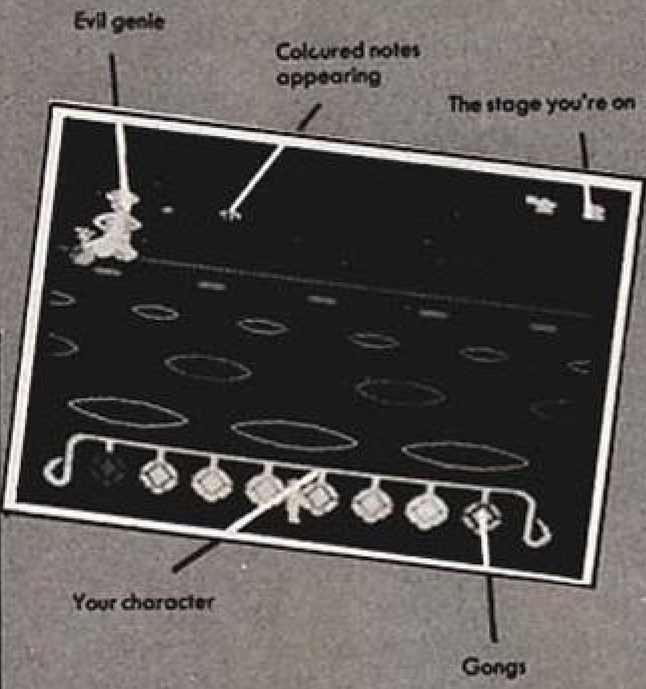
Fairy stories usually talk about releasing genies from bottles but here you've got to bung a few back in their lamps. The action is a cross between a 3D flying-carpet version of *Pole Position* and the music and colours game *Simon*.

There are two types of quest and a practice mode. The quests are both composed of alternate sequences of flying your carpet through tunnels and then battling a genie in a test of memory, speed and ears. The practice mode allows you to fly any one of the 21 tunnels aboard your magical carpet.

> **SECOND OPINION**
>
> *This is a game with a lot of charm and musical appeal even if some of the notes do seem to have sneaked into the wrong tunesThe flying sequences start off fairly easily, but soon get hairy enough to induce a feeling of flying carpet sickness. There's enough of the mystery of the orient to make it well worth a look.*
>
> PC

The tunnels are comprised of diamond shapes which you have to fly through to avoid being knocked off your carpet. The early tunnels are fairly easy just bending up and down or left and right, but later on they zig-zag and twist all over the place making your job extremely tough. Each tunnel is accompanied by a great little tune that bops away as you fly. Combined with the cute little tilting carpet and movement effect it makes a very slick stage.

The quests are the seven trials and the throne quest. In the former you only have to collect the seven pieces of one lamp whereas in the latter you have to get three lamps and fly all 21 tunnels. In the seven trials once you have succesfully completed a tunnel you appear on a screen with eight coloured gongs. You're now off your carpet and can walk around hitting gongs. Hitting one gong three times in a row summons a genie who releases several coloured notes into the air.



Once he has finished the notes will descend towards you one by one and you have to hit the right coloured gong to make them disappear. On each succesful journey to the genie there are more notes to deal with until you've made seven trips. If you fall off the carpet or get caught by a note then you return to the beginning of the stage. You can have as many goes at a stage as you like but will always start at the flying carpet stage.

The throne quest is split into three sections of seven in which you take on three different genies. Everything is as for the seven trials except that when you get to the gong stage each of the three genies behaves differently. The first genie gives both the colour and tone of the notes he releases but the colour disappears as soon as the notes have all been released. The second genie doesn't sound the notes so you can't be guided by ear but have to memorise all the notes' colours which again disappear very fast. The third genie is the toughest of the lot since he gives no colours at all – you have to pick out the notes purely by ear.

If you succeed in the throne quest you are placed on a throne and rewarded with the *Master of the Lamps* music itself. All of the tunnels are tough but a delight to watch and the gong stages in the throne quest will stretch your memory and ears to the limit.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Terrific 3D flying carpet sequences.**
- **The accompanying music is great.**
- **Gong sequence is very testing.**
- **The best flying carpet simulation on the market.**

BAD NEWS

- **There are only two sections.**
- **Flying through tunnels and bashing gongs may get uninteresting.**

GRAPHICS	84%
SONICS	93%
GRAB FACTOR	83%
STAYING POWER	63%
A A RATING	79%

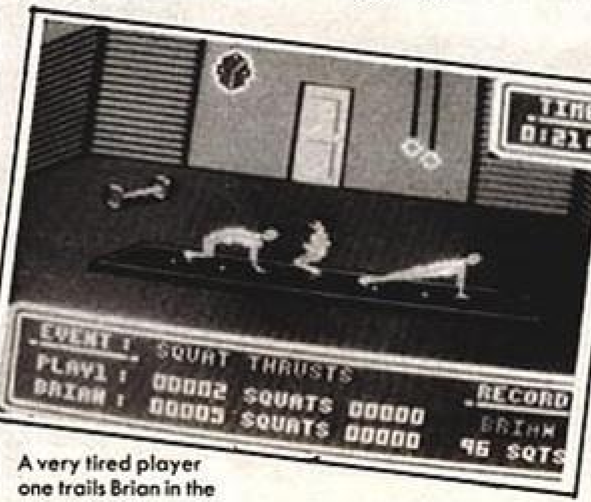
BRIAN JACK'S SUPERSTAR CHALLENGE

Martech, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

Anything Daley Thompson can do you can bet Brian Jacks will want to try as well, so here is another joystick-busting, wrist-snapping, hand-cramping bout of athleticism. Eight events have been taken from the TV series *Superstars* and converted into computer events where you have to compete with old BJ himself.

There are four events on each side of the tape and you have to load them separately, making two different games. One side has the 100 metres, archery, cycling and football while the other has 66 metre swimming, squat thrusts, canoeing and arm dips. In each event you compete against Brian with the screen showing both men and their progress.

The 100 metres and canoeing are the most straightforward events since all you have to do is waggle that joystick or hammer those keys as fast as you can. For these events you are given a power gauge on the right of the screen which shows you how much you're putting into it. If you can keep up three quarters of full power you're doing well. The only other thing to watch out for is the ropes in canoeing – they'll slow you down if you bump into them.The swimming and cycling are also mostly a matter of hard waggling but have a couple of minor complications. In the swimming you have to take a breath every so often and until you do your power is greatly reduced. If, however, you take a breath when you don't need one this also slows you down. In the cycling your bike has five gears and you have to work through these to get full speed. The problem is that if you tire and slow down towards the end of the race you drop back through the gears.



A very tired player one trails Brian in the squat thrusts

In the 100m and cycling you're given a side view of the racers, in the swimming and canoeing its an overhead view but for the squat thrusts and arm dips you switch to a gym. The squat thrusts are where you lie in a press-up position and then move your feet forward and back between two points behind you. This is done by hammering on alternate keys or joystick movement in the required direction. You've got 60 seconds to do as many as you can. The arm dips are a similar test but you merely have to press a button to change direction once you have dipped down or stretched upwards.

The archery and football are much more events of skill. For archery you have an

> **SECOND OPINION**
>
> *It's very annoying to have to change sides to get the other four events. I'm not entirely sure it's worth it – all this waggling's a bit old hat. Only the archery really grabbed me. If you've waggled through one event you've waggled the lot.*
>
> PC

SEE 42

overhead view of yourself and a target. The target moves right to left, ie descends the screen. You have to set the elevation of your crossbow and time the bolt's release, taking into consideration the wind speed and direction that is set at the start of the event. In the football you are given a 3D view of a goal ahead of you and have to dribble through four cones to get to it. Then you have to try to score against the computer goalie.

For each set of four events you start on the easiest level and if you can beat Brian on points across all four you move to a higher level where Brian is even tougher. The graphics are good for each event although there isn't much in the way of sound effects. It provides a different range of events to those in *DT's Decathlon* but they're not as slickly done or as addictive.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Eight exhausting events.**
- ▶ **Good graphics throughout.**
- ▶ **A tough opponent who gets tougher.**
- ▶ **Good for exercising the arm.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Changing directions for the dips is incredibly frustrating.**
- ▶ **I couldn't find a way to score a goal in football and there's no help in the instrucions.**
- ▶ **No two-player option.**
- ▶ **You can only load four events at a time.**
- ▶ **You can't practice events singly.**

GRAPHICS	73%
SONICS	36%
GRAB FACTOR	72%
STAYING POWER	62%
A A RATING	67%

MACADAM BUMPER

PSS, £7.95 cass, keys

Pinball has always been a popular game for converting to micros although most pinball wizards would rather have the real thing. Computer versions have often suffered from unrealistic ball movement or bad table design but this offering from France has no such problems.

The game comes with its own designed screen and a score table on the left. This has a scantily clad lady on it (or a naked one if you buy the naughty version mail order) and score counters for four players. There are also bonus lights for extra balls and specials.

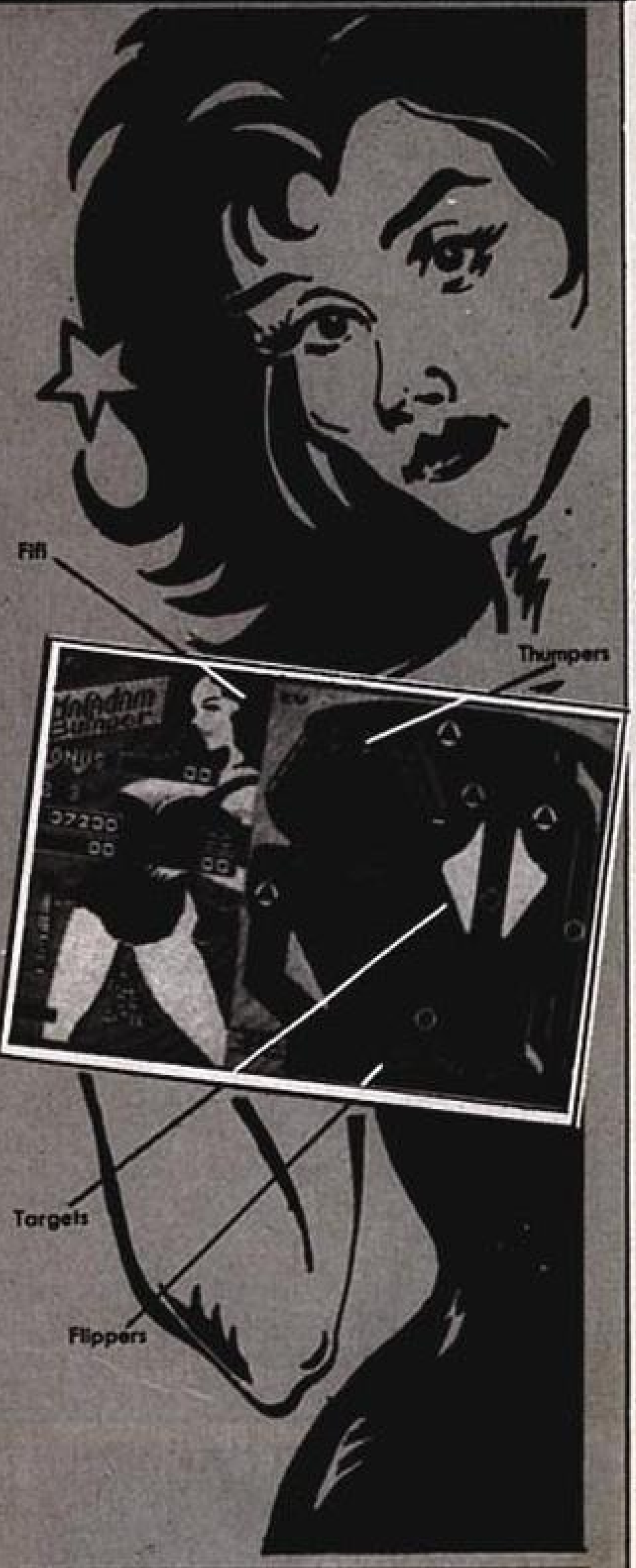
The initial screen has stacks of features on it with three pairs of flippers (one pair on the upper half of the screen) and the launcher on the right. You have left and right flipper controls as well as left and right jolt controls for when the ball is headed straight off the table. Other features include the usual circular 'thumpers', elastic-sided blocks, spring-loaded holes and targets. The targets are your main method of scoring and when you knock them all down you get large bonuses depending on how many times you do it. Up to four players can play and each one gets five balls with which to try to earn a high score.

If you tire of the starting layout you can modify it or create your own masterpiece. The first things you can change are the parameters and values of the table features. You can determine the slope, elasticity, speed, tilt sensitivity (don't jolt too much), and stroboscope. The last of these makes the ball disappear at intervals so that you are playing blind. You can also change the values of the various scoring obstacles, the bouncing force and when the bonuses are given.

After that you can change the actual layout of the table or create a completely new one. You can put in or remove any of the standard features and alter their colours to suit your taste. Holes, flippers, thumpers, lines, targets, bumpers and a drwing capability are all there. Once you've designed the table you can save it for later use or as an entry in PSS's competition to win a real pinball table.

The ball nips around pretty fast and smooth with speedily reacting flippers. The initial layout is a good one with no traps but plenty of high scoring possibility if you've got the skill and flipper timing.

BW



GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Excellent pinball simulation.**
- ▶ **Ball movement and table features are realistic.**
- ▶ **Screen design facility adds lasting interest.**
- ▶ **Four player competitions can be quite exciting .**

SECOND OPINION

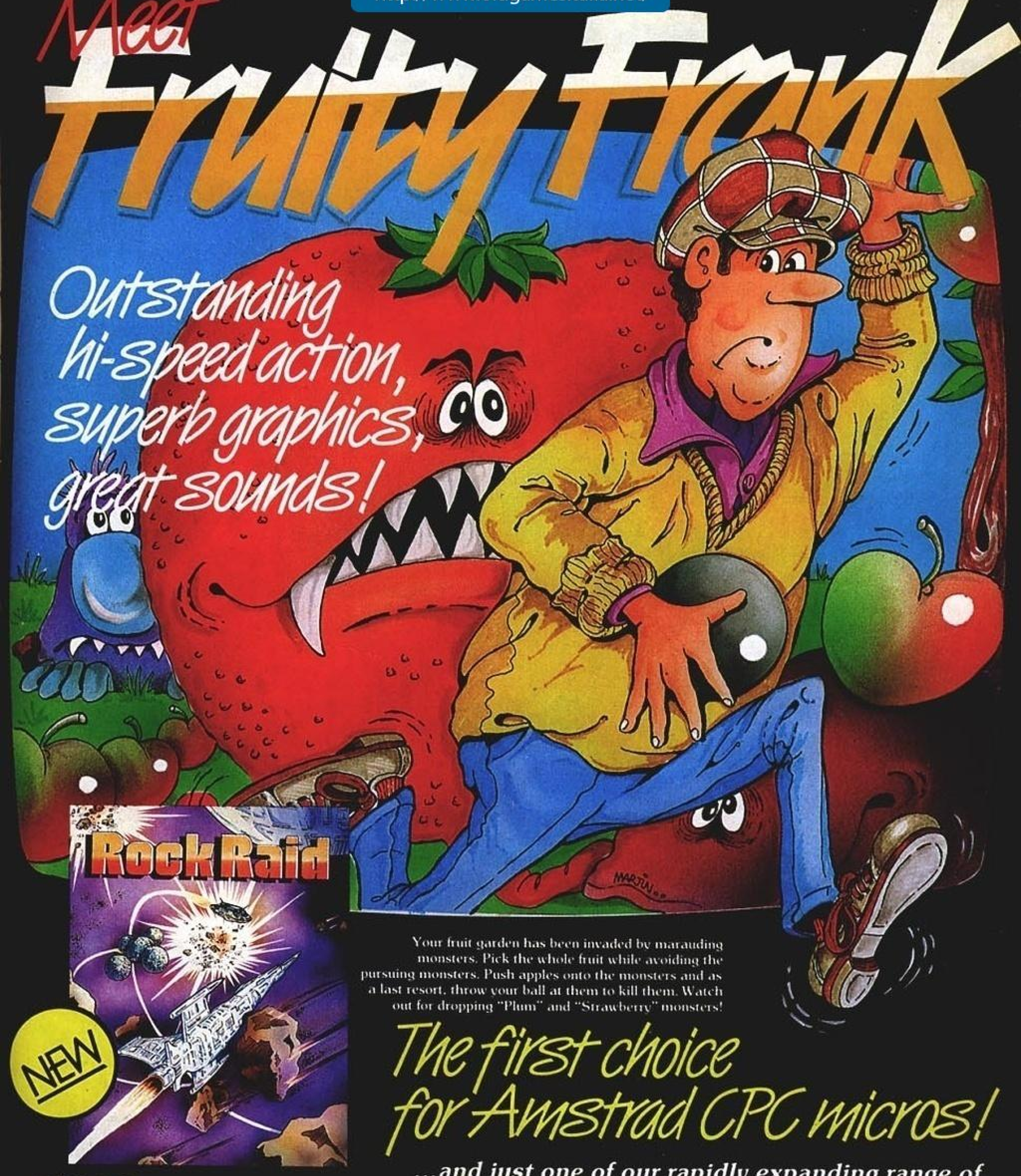
Despite the lack of physical effort, pinball can be an enjoyable game on a micro. PSS's French import is certainly the best available on the Amstrad – the ball behavesery realistically and, as long as you're not distracted by the picture of Fifi, you should get a decent game.

PC

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Even with screen design it's a one screen game.**
- ▶ **Pinball may have a limited appeal.**
- ▶ **There's always that element of luck in the bounce.**

GRAPHICS	67%
SONICS	42%
GRAB FACTOR	77%
STAYING POWER	70%
A A RATING	72%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THE COVENANT

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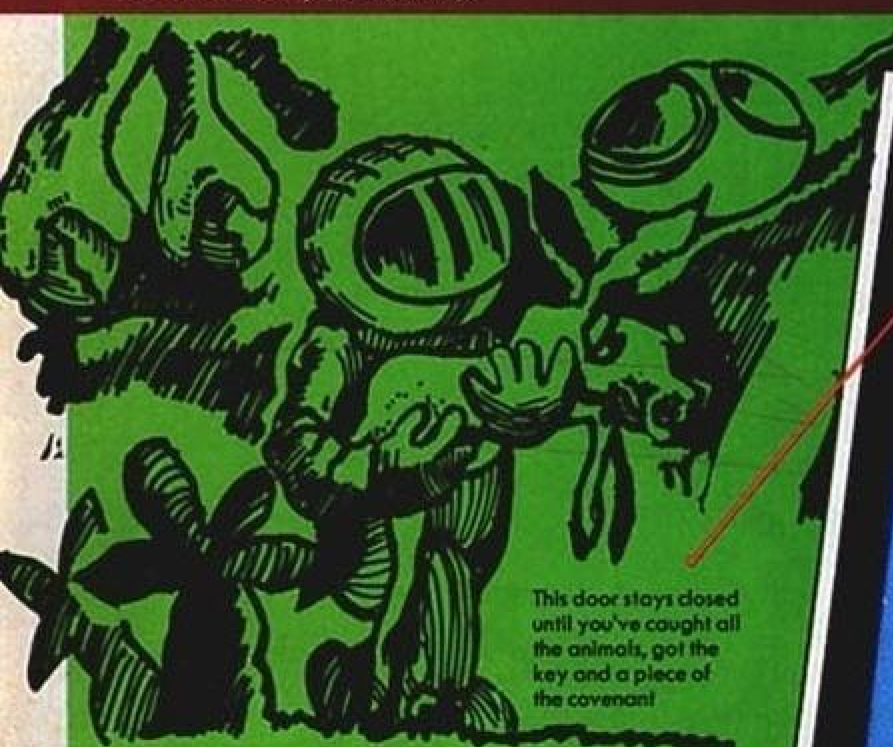
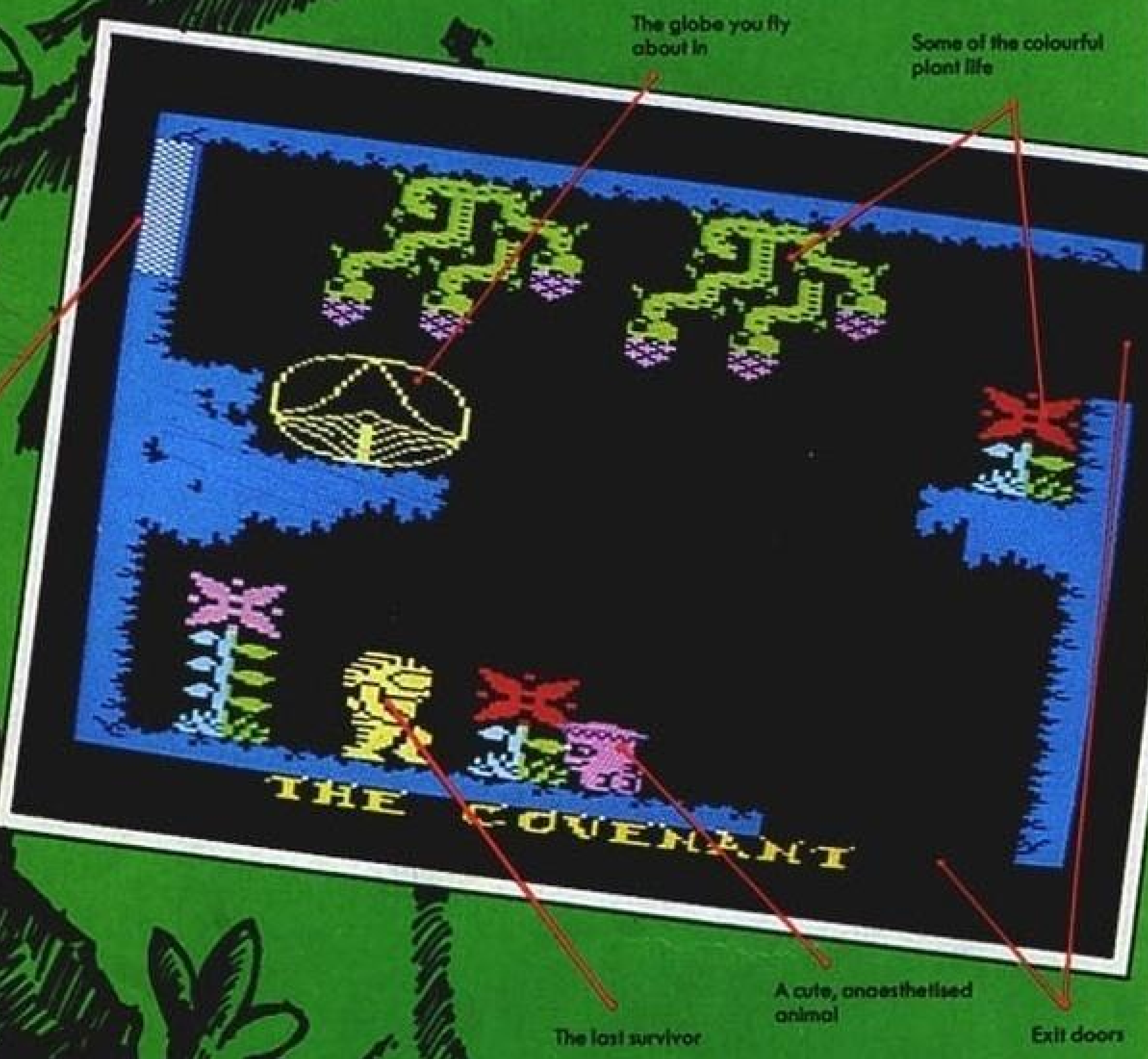




The globe you fly about in

Some of the colourful plant life

This door stays closed until you've caught all the animals, got the key and a piece of the covenant

A cute, anaesthetised animal

The last survivor

Exit doors

The covenant is made up of 64 pieces of parchment which you have to recover. To do this you also have to collect the 64 species of subterranean animal life that will repopulate your barren planet's surface.

You are supposedly the last of your race and appear as a chap in a space suit. You get about by walking and jumping or by travelling in your globe which floats about the place and is affected by gravity and inertia like a wind-blown bubble. The quest takes place in a 256 room cavern split up into sections of four and separated by volcanic passages.

Each four-room section is arranged as a box with a creature in each room. Creatures are different for each area but they all have to be caught. Also in each box are a key, a chest containing a parchment piece of the covenant and an anaesthetic. Your first task is to collect the anaesthetic which allows you to operate your stun gun on the creatures. This can only be done when you are out of the globe and walking around.

SECOND OPINION

The idea of controlling an anaesthetising spaceman is a very appealing one and the game is very well executed – even if there's an Ultimateish looto it. Graphics are unusually pretty and from the way that some of those creatures roll their eyes around it looks as though they need a good strong Mickey Finn to keep them under control.

PC

The problem is that the anaesthetic changes for different animals. The silly things don't appreciate that you are trying to help them and attack you when unstunned. The next drawback is that once they are stunned you have to get back to the globe and pick them up before they awake.

You have an energy level which is depleted by the creatures and by moving around, both when walking and in the globe. This must not fall too low or you die and your only way to replace it is to find an energy point. Like the anaesthetics these aren't always instantly recognisable and you'll have to be out of the globe to use them. Beware of imposter points, though, since these will drain your energy.f the screen border turns blue you won't last for long.

Once the four creatures in a section are captured you can collect the parchment using the key and so open up doors through to further sections. To get to them you have to pass through a volcanic passage in which fire and molten rock are spat at you from the tunnel sides. You'll need to be in the globe since you can't jump up some of these. The fire and lava are also very energy-sapping and you'll need to time your way by them with care.

The caves are all bedecked with colourful vegetation, interesting outcrops of rock and some very cute animals. All this, along with your globe, makes the screens very pleasing indeed. Control of both the globe and jumping is touchy but you get used to it quite fast. There is some flicker on the globe's movement but not so as to make it noticeably bad.

BW

Spot the Object

Anaesthetics: these tend to be like bowls of fruit or small patches of vegetation. Not as tall as most of the ordinary plants.

Keys: smaller thin objects which are a bit of a giveaway since you can't fire after picking them up.

Animals: easy to suss since they're the only other thing moving around.

Energy points: usually a similar size to plants but uncomfortably unidentifiable from energy-draining points.

Chests: contain pieces of the Covenant but can't up till you've completed the other tasks.

GOOD NEWS

- **Very attractive screens.**
- **Puzzling element as you find out which object does what.**
- **Good arcade action as you fight to control your globe and jumping.**
- **Plenty of rooms and lots of creatures to stun.**
- **Just the right degree of difficulty.**

BAD NEWS

- **Slight flicker on globe movement.**
- **Can be easy to get killed (constant saving is the only answer).**
- **Caves may become rather samey.**

GRAPHICS	89%
SONICS	47%
GRAB FACTOR	80%
STAYING POWER	85%
A A RATING	83%

ACTION TEST

A VIEW TO A KILL

Domark, £10.99 cass, joystick or keys

Spin-offs and licensing deals are all the rage these days and Domark have enlisted 007 himself to try to bring them sucess. The game is based on the most recent Bond blockbuster film and is in three distinct sections, each with a very different aim.

The game has been turned on its head in relation to the film since the three games are played in the reverse order to which the events happen on celluloid. You start with the Silicon Valley mine (the film's finale), move onto the City Hall escape and finally end up at the Paris chase. This has been done to provide more incentive in the scoring system and since you can practice the last two games without completing the first, isn't too important.

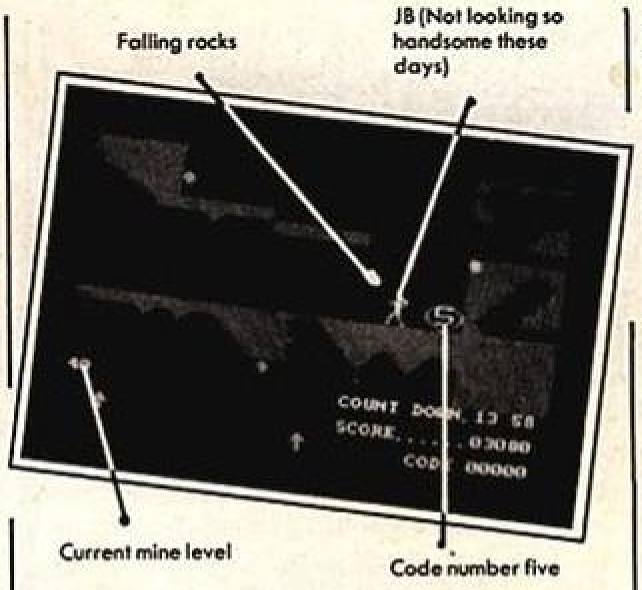
On loading you are given a choice of which of the three games to play, accompanied by the *Duran Duran* theme music to the movie. Once you've chosen it's another wait while the game loads. When games one and three are loaded they play the Bond theme but game two has no sound at all. Each game has a short instruction page and two and three allow you to enter codes obtained from completing the previous game that allow you to score points.

> **SECOND OPINION**
>
> *I was neither shaken nor stirred by this. None of the three games struck me as terribly interesting. On the other hand they weren't terribly uninteresting. The graphics are pretty poor but some of the gameplay demands a certain amount of brainwork – but not enough to tax a budding JB.*
>
> **PC**

The mine sequence sets you the task of finding a bomb and defusing it. It's composed of a large flick-screen area filled with falling boulders, holes in the floor and objects lying around. You have to find the bomb and the pieces of a winch and then persuade the evil villain's female sidekick, May Day, to winch you down to the bomb. There you will need the right tools to defuse it.

Bond can run and jump his way around without dying although being hit or falling a long way will reduce his time before the bomb goes off. There are lots of objects about like a grapnel gun, dynamite, parts of the winch and various code numbers. These can be picked up and used with the 'duck shoot' which allows you to scroll through the list of commands like search, drop, use, pick up, pause, get lift, winch down and winch up.

Completion of the mine sequence gives you a code for the city hall escape. Here James has escaped from a lift but his companion is still trapped and there is a fire blazing in the building. You have to rescue Stacey and then get out of the building. To do this you have to work your way through the 75 rooms, opening doors, searching cupboards and collecting codes for the final escape from the building. Each room is shown in 3D and Bond moves from room to room by running into an open doorway. You can also get between floors using the stairs on both sides of the building. A 'duck shoot' is once again used for selecting controls.



The final game is more straightforward arcade stuff in which you have to pursue a parachutist who has leapt off the Eiffel tower. You drive around the city streets trying to avoid the buildings, other cars and police. The bottom half of the display is the streetplan from above (easiest to use) while the top is a 3D view of the road ahead (useless). Your car can accelerate forward or in reverse but if it takes too much damage or isn't at the parachutist's landing zone you lose. There are several landing sites but it is difficult to tell which one the parachutist is heading for until quite late on.

Individually the games are reasonable and as a whole they are good value but not outstanding in quality. The music is really very good and it's a pity it doesn't play throughout the games.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Three games for just over the price of one.**
- **Excellent pieces of title music.**
- **Challenging games that aren't easy to solve.**
- **Nice plot tie-ups if you'vseen the film.**

BAD NEWS

- **Graphics and animation aren't that hot.**
- **Loading is a pain.**
- **Game ideas one and three are simple and unoriginal.**

GRAPHICS	59%
SONICS	87%
GRAB FACTOR	57%
STAYING POWER	69%
A A RATING	67%

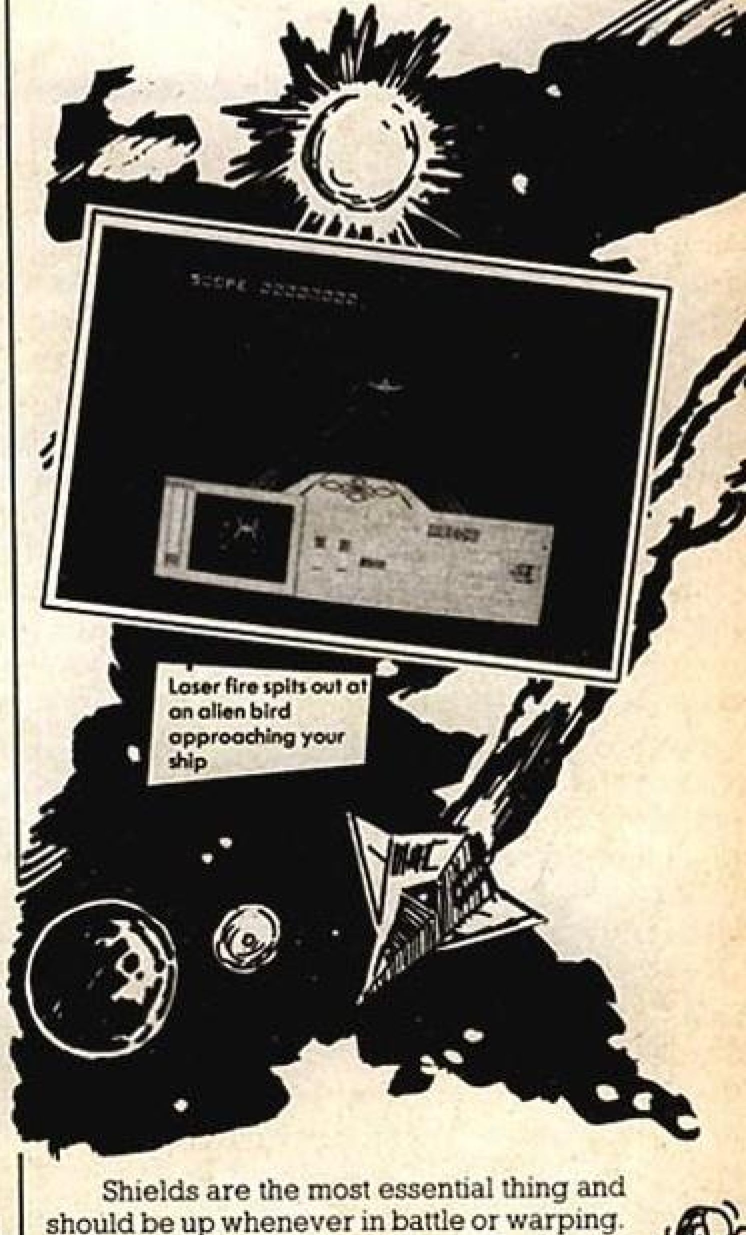
CODENAME MAT II

Domark, £8.95 cass, joystick with keys or keys

Codename Mat was an early best-seller on the Amstrad and this is an enhanced version with several extra features and some improved graphics. The action revolves around Mat as before, attempting to defend a planet's energy satellites against the Myon hordes.

The satellites are in four rows of six, making a grid of 24 sites to defend with your single craft. The screen is split into two sections, the top half showing your view out of the cockpit and the bottom half the instrument-status display. The view will only ever contain stars, the enemy, missiles and satellites and only needs to be watched during the heat of combat.

The quadrant chart appears in the bottom left of the screen and shows the status of the satellites, your positon and the number and position of the enemy. When the Myons are in the same quadrant as a satellite they will gradually damage it until it is destroyed. You have to keep at least one of the rows complete in order to continue the game. While on the chart you can determine warp strength and direction (a compass heading) to engage the Myons. You can then warp, but before doing so should prepare for battle.


Laser fire spits out at an alien bird approaching your ship

Shields are the most essential thing and should be up whenever in battle or warping. To help you remember this you should also put the safety mechanism on which will shut down overheating weapons and prevent you warping without shields. The targeting computer should also be on since this provides an on-screen sight that tells you when the enemy are within range.

Once in an enemy sector you need to put on the battle computer to tell you where the enemy are and how far away. This will appear in the bottom left of the screen in place of the quadrant chart. This area is also used for the long range and short range scans which can be used as alternatives to the battle computer since they provide a 3D indication of where objects (Myons or satellites) are.

SEE 48..

Once you've closed in on an enemy you have a choice of two weapons – plasma or laser bolts. These slide in and out of the nose of your ship, visible from the cockpit. Plasma are good for long range destruction while lasers are more effective close-in. The first wave of nasties are blue birds that flap across the view but like all the aliens explode into four brown chunks when hit.

SECOND OPINION

Deep-space games aren't usually my scene, but CNM2 had just enough 'alien termination' to keep me at it. It's far from being a great game – some of the Myons bear a striking resemblance to the Galaxians of yore and the weapons seem a little antiquated – but there's enough to do to keep you busy for a few light years.

PC

The waves all take different characteristics with groups of one to five aliens in varying forms, one of which disconcertingly disappears for part of the time. Some waves don't shoot at you but take evasive action. Those that do shoot can cause damage to your systems and this is where a new dimension is brought into the game.

When a system is damaged you have to put one of two droids to work on repairing it. This is a lengthy process and while being repaired the system is out of action. There is another chance to repair things, though, at the end of each wave. Here you can repair or move satellites to fill gaps in rows, or repair your ship faster than usual. But this is only available for a limited number of turns. The end of the wave (or a life) is also where you are informed of how much the working satellites have boosted your score by.

This is certainly an improvement on the original *Mat*, with better combat graphics and more ship functions. There still isn't much out there in space but this war of attrition is pretty testing.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Better graphics and features than the original.**
- ▶ **Constant pressure from aliens and attending to systems.**
- ▶ **Damage report and droids are nice fetures.**
- ▶ **Not a matter of one hit and you're dead but a real long-term battle to stay alive.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **3D graphics still don't give much impression of movement.**
- ▶ **Even with varied aliens it's still the same action for each sector.**
- ▶ **Keeping track of all the controls can be difficult.**

GRAPHICS	70%
SONICS	52%
GRAB FACTOR	72%
STAYING POWER	78%
A A RATING	74%

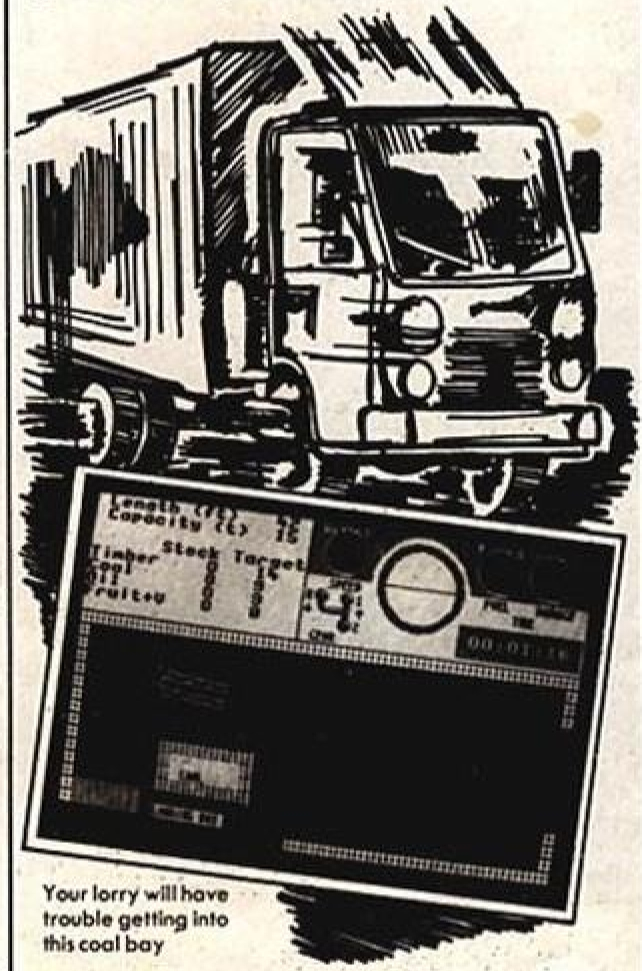
JUGGERNAUT

CRL, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

The task is to collect a load of goods in your HGV but it has to be done within the day and without crashing the lorry or running out of fuel. You drive the thundering beast around the maze of city streets trying to find petrol stations, phone boxes and the depots containing the four goods you must collect.

The streets are viewed from above with your lorry consisting of an articulated cab and trailer. You can drive anywhere on the road but there are numerous obstacles if you stray off it and even driving on the grass will damage the lorry, which can be of varying sizes from a six to 15 ton container. The larger container allows you to carry more but is much harder to control. If you need time to get used to this there is a practice driving option.

At the start of the day you are given a target for four goods – timber, coal, oil and fruit/veg. You have to collect the required tonnage of each and the profit you've made will be assessed. The goods are located in loading bays spread across the town. Some bays are harder to enter than others but to load or unload goods you only have to have part of the lorry in a dotted zone.



Your lorry will have trouble getting into this coal bay

Getting in and out of most bays requires you to master reversing the lorry and this is extremely difficult with the pivot in the middle of it. There are two forward gears allowing you to travel up to 40 mph but at that speed the truck becomes very hard to control again and you can easily suffer from oversteer with such a lumbering monster.

Apart from the four goods bays there are four petrol stations and your home base. The home base is where the goods have to be delivered and the petrol stations are where you can refuel and get damage to your truck repaired. This of course costs money so the less petrol you use and damage you do the better.

When stationary you can examine a street plan of the town which shows you your current position and that of your base. To see the depots and petrol stations you have to be on a screen with a phone which allows you to pinpoint the depot on the map.

SECOND OPINION

No sweat-stained vest is required to play this game, although I did find that chewing a Yorkie helped my concentration. Steering is very awkward, due to the articulation, but if you get on an open stretch and get your foot down there's a feeling of great power – especially when you deliberately plough through a load of buildings. Driving a juggernaut is fun, but I doubt if many people will want to stay on the road for a long time.

PC

ANDROID 2

Vortex, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

A game that commands you to 'rationalise the paradox zone' can't be all bad. *Android 2* is nearly all good – fast, colourful, addictive and fearsome. As the android in question it's your perilous duty to rid three areas of the repulsive Millitoids. It's a nasty job, but someone's got to do it and it might as well be you.

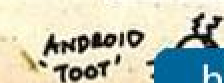
You begin in the 'maze of death', where you land in your transporter capsule from who knows where. The maze is a puzzling complex of hedges, viewed in 3D. There are five Millitoids per zone, but the playing area is so large that they're not easy to find. What you do encounter immediately on leaving the capsule are the other evil creatures inhabiting the maze.

To begin with, there are hordes of Bouncers. These are the Millitoids' minions, grotesque red figures with wobbling antennae and whirling arms. As the name suggests, they bounce. They are indestructible and move in rigidly ordained patterns. Unfortunately they are also very numerous – avoiding action is not always easy to take. Contact is fatal.

Mutants are fewer and, happily, can be killed with one blast from your trusty laser. They're not easy to hit since they corkscrew unpredictably around the maze. Again, contact is fatal.

As if Bouncers and Mutants weren't enough, there is the additional hazard of land mines exploding underfoot. They can be easily spotted, but are too many to be easily sidestepped. A mine, though, will not kill you outright, but merely sap your energy.

And so we come to the Millitoids, the reason for your presence. A Millitoid is a large, pulsating beast which slithers all over



The roads are made up of lots of straights, ninety degree bends and crossroads with the occasional roundabout or dead end thrown in. There are buildings, traffic lights, bollards and cones waiting if you stray off the road and these will register a crash and a lot of damage if you hit them. The damage is shown on a little gauge, as is your fuel level, so you know when the game is about to be up. Straying onto the grass also increases the damage but at a much slower rate.

With practice you can master driving the lorry to make quite a compulsive game as you race against time. It plays off the need for great skill and concentration against the need to hurry and get things done as fast as possible. A bit like certain aspects of real life. The graphics are fairly simple and there are just simple screech and bang sounds, but the gameplay is demanding and addictive.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **A very demanding task.**
- ▶ **Once the control is learnt it's satisfying driving around.**
- ▶ **Good details included like gradual damage, gears, phones and reversing.**
- ▶ **The depots are randomly placed making a new game every time.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Graphics and sound are simple.**
- ▶ **Control can be difficult, sometimes frustrating.**
- ▶ **May not have a very long term appeal.**

GRAPHICS	53%
SONICS	40%
GRAB FACTOR	73%
STAYING POWER	68%
A A RATING	69%

PROJECT FUTURE

Gremlin Graphics, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Not very aptly named this one, since the aim is to self destruct a space ship and there's not much future in that. However, to destroy the SS Future, as the ship is called, you have to find eight destruct codes hidden in a colourful, 256 screen maze.

You enter the ship through a tunnel on your scooter. This is left behind you, though, and you appear in the ship on foot, a cute little figure in a red spacesuit. You are armed with a laser that only shoots forward or at a small angle up or down. This is your means of defence against the hordes of death-dealing robots that inhabit the ship.

The eight codes for which you are searching take the form of small coloured cubes which you just have to pass over to pick up. They're located on five levels of ship and to find them it's just a matter of exploration and memory since they never move. Once you've collected them all you have to activate the self-destruct system which could have something to do with a button marked 'push' on level one (but that would be telling).

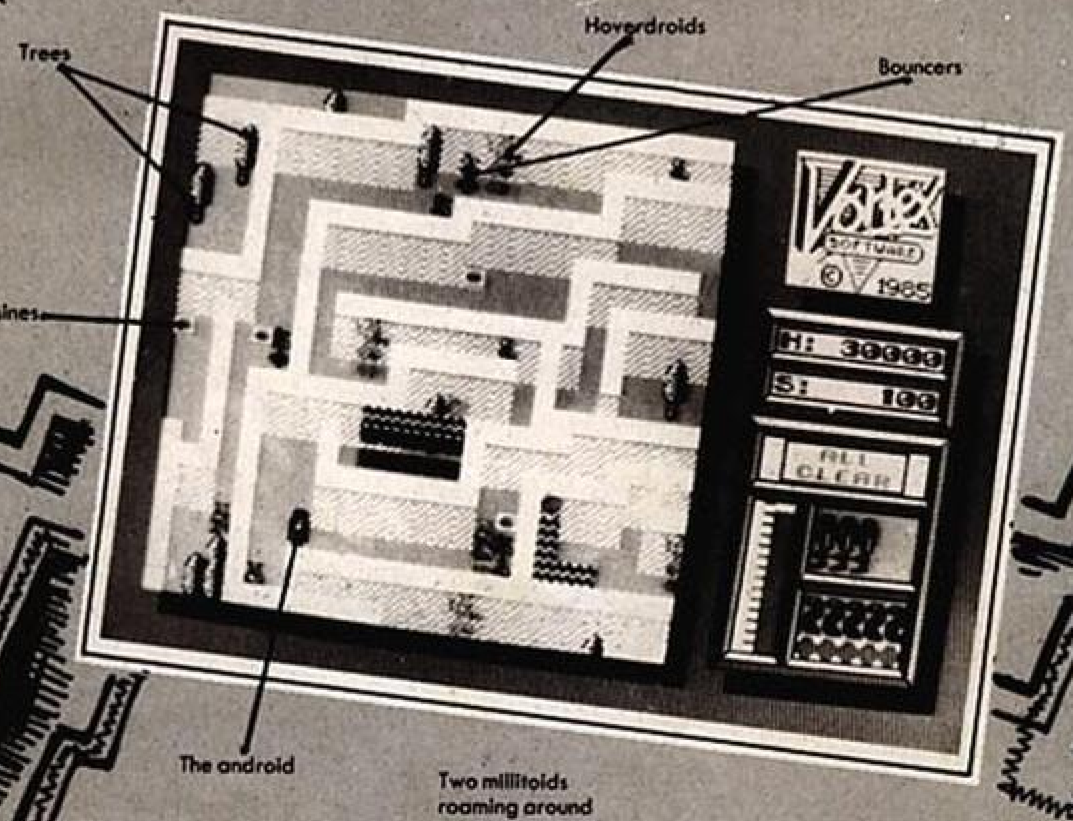
SECOND OPINION

If I'm going to run around spaceships blowing myself up I like to know why. This program neglected to give me any reason for being where I wasnd consequently I kept wondering why I was bothering. Graphics are certainly very pretty and colourful, but the Robotronic blasting soon becomes tiresome.

PC

The ship is made up of colourful corridors and rooms that are drawn in some intricate and attractive patterns. Travel between them is of the flick-screen variety. Within these pretty surroundings appear the equally well-drawn but deadly robots. These come in a number of guises but all are

SEE 30



the place. It's rather like an overgrown caterpillar, but much more dangerous. There's only one way to waste a Millitoid, and that's by shooting it in the head five times. First, though, you've got to find one and then stay out of trouble long enough to administer the necessary dose. If you succeed in exterminating five you have to make it back to your capsule before your time limit runs out.

This gives you access to the Paradox Zone, so called because each area looks the same and contains a capsule. But which is the right one? I'm sure I don't know. Once more there are the Bouncers and Mutants. Once more there are five Millitoids to be done in before you can go off and try to find the right capsule.

Android 2 has only three zones of action, but there's more than enough going on in them to satisfy hardened gamesters. The 3D view is very smartly achieved, but the scrolling could lose you lives - the screen moves when you get to the edge. And there may just be a Millitoid waiting for you on the other side.

PC

SECOND OPINION

Enjoyable pressure play in which you can't afford to take a breather. The graphics are greawith good use of colours and 3D. Can be frustrating if you get yourself trapped in a corner but the difficulty level seems to be about right. Gimme another android to wreck.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Compulsive action.**
- ▶ **Excellent 3D graphics.**
- ▶ **Disgusting opponents.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Perilous scrolling.**
- ▶ **Only three zones.**

GRAPHICS	78%
SONICS	43%
GRAB FACTOR	82%
STAYING POWER	73%
A A RATING	75%

instantly lethal if you touch them. They materialise into a room as you move into it and home in on you. The robots always appear in the same place though and for a split second you can pass through them as they appear. This means that with fast movement and a happy trigger finger you can get past them.

The codes aren't all you'll find on the ship though. Guns can be picked up and for a while give you the ability to fire hyperblasters which are bigger than your ordinary laser bolts and can produce rapid fire rather than single shot. Another aid to your defence is the blue spacesuit which will give you immunity from the robots for a period, killing them on contact but for no points.

OOTIE !
FRUITIE

There are also two aids to movement. One is a scooter in which you can nip round the ship while the other is the teleport system. This is shown by a square containing crackling electricity and depending on which side of it you enter will take you to one of the other decks of the ship. There are five decks but whether you need to visit them all is for you to find out.

Once you've got all of the codes and activated the self-destruct you've got to get out fast before the end of the Future. It's all very frantic and reminiscent of games like *Berzerk* but in a much nicer graphic setting. It should take some while to crack but doesn't present much of a mental challenge.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ Very bright, colourful screens.
- ▶ Demanding action against a constant onslaught of robots.
- ▶ 256 screens and a testing game-challenge.

BAD NEWS

- ▶ Just exploration and no real puzzling.
- ▶ Blasted one robot – blasted them all.
- ▶ Instructions are unnecesarily sparse.

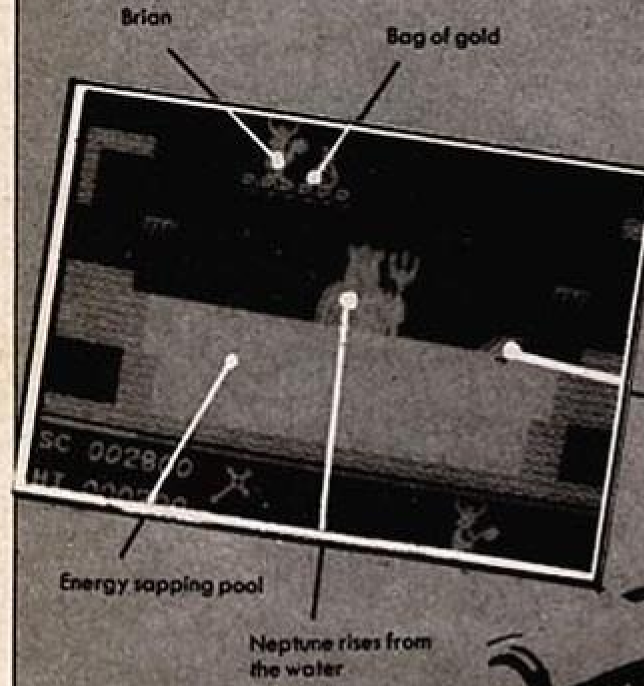
GRAPHICS	82%
SONICS	24%
GRAB FACTOR	65%
STAYING POWER	71%
A A RATING	69%

BRIAN BLOODAXE

The Edge, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

This is the game that features 'primary imbalance', flickery graphics and a mad viking out to conquer Britain. Brian has to get the crown jewels and sit on the throne with them – and that's about all you'll learn from the instructions except for the control keys.

The jewels and throne are somewhere amongst the 127 screens. Each screen is filled with platforms, pools, objects and deadly moving animals and machines. On most screens there are unmoving objects which can be picked up and used, although you can only carry three at once. Brian gets around by walking, jumping and falling, although you can only fall a short distance without dying.



The creatures that inhabit the screens come in a weird variety of shapes and sizes ranging from bishops to soldiers, runaway rhinos to the Loch Ness monster and Neptune. They all follow movement patterns, shuttling up and down or left and right, sometimes triggered by Brian's actions. Contact with anything moving (sometimes static as well) will injure Brian, losing him energy. If he suffers too much he loses a life, leaving his helmet to fall to the ground and starting him back where he entered the screen.

The wildlife doesn't have it all its own way, though, since Brian can fight back. By standing underneath things and jumping up you can spike creatures with the prongs on Brian's helmet, killing them. These can also be used to stick him into ceilings, although they work loose after a while dropping you to the ground. Creatures can also be used as stepping stones allowing you to jump or walk on top of them.

The objects that are lying around all have their uses but you have to work them out for yourself. Many allow you to open gates which will be hoisted out of the way when you get it right. Others may have a more devious purpose like stopping or making an event happen on screen. The only real way to find out is by trial and error which will result in the 'Hand of God' blowing Brian into space dust many times.

Screens can be very different with some interesting effects. There's the pool table with deadly balls bouncing around, Neptune and the Loch Ness monster that rise and fall from their watery lairs and Daleks and soldiers who fire guns at you. The lakes are particularly nasty, usually infested with sharks and if Brian sinks under water he gradually drowns as his energy bar falls. Other things you may be amazed to meet are the galloping rhinos, cruise missile, toilets, a mad Scotsman and a clockwork orange.

The large variety of graphics is somewhat spoilt by the flicker that accompanies many. The colour is better than on previous versions though. The tune that plays throughout the game is the Monty Python theme song and a nice rendition of it too. It may take some time to start solving problems but is very absorbing once you do.

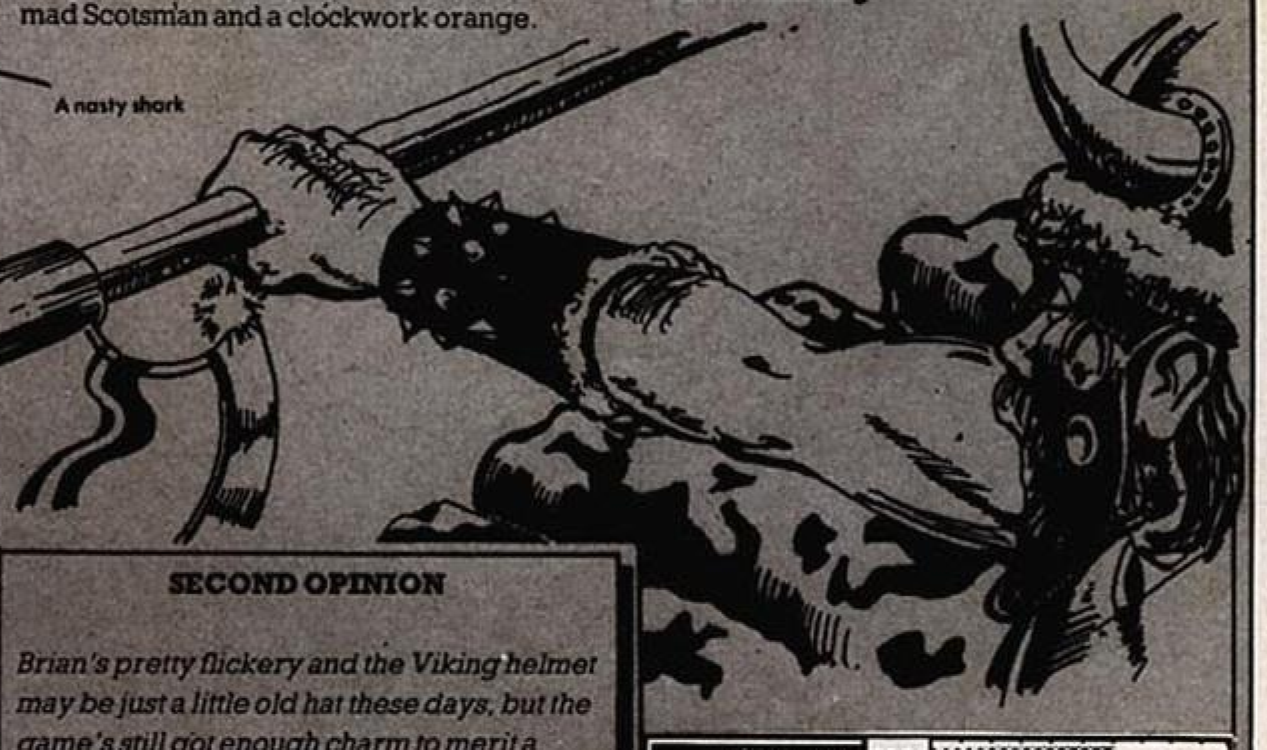
BW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ 127 screens and over 300 enemies.
- ▶ Many problems to solve.
- ▶ Some nice touches of humour.
- ▶ Very difficult to complete.

BAD NEWS

- ▶ Very flickery graphics in places.
- ▶ Takes time to get into.
- ▶ Some problems may need too much lateral thinking.

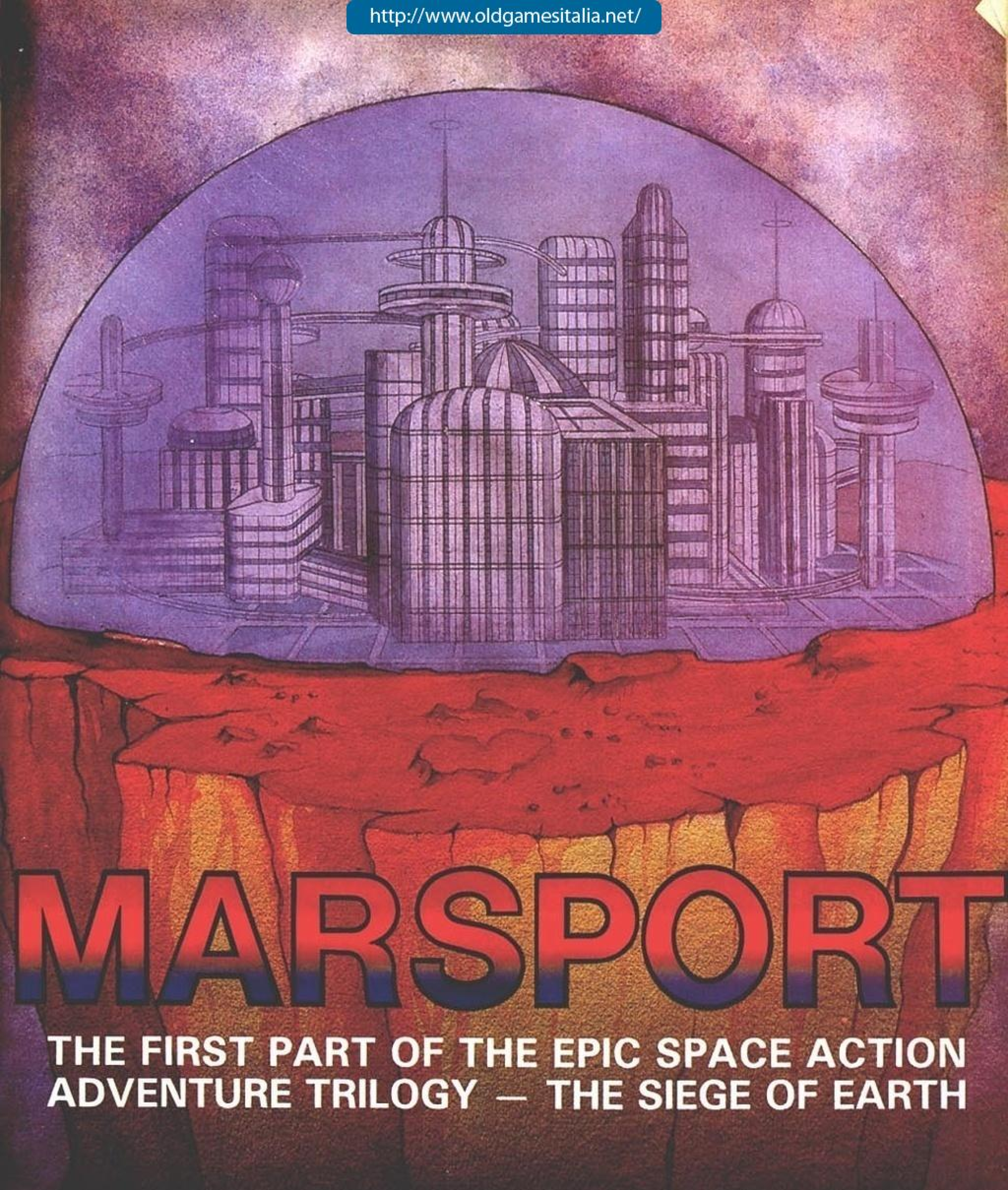


SECOND OPINION

Brian's pretty flickery and the Viking helmet may be just a little old hat these days, but the game's still got enough charm to merit a serious look. I found some of the problems very tricky and some of the opponents very amusing.

PC

GRAPHICS	61%
SONICS	67%
GRAB FACTOR	62%
STAYING POWER	84%
A A RATING	73%



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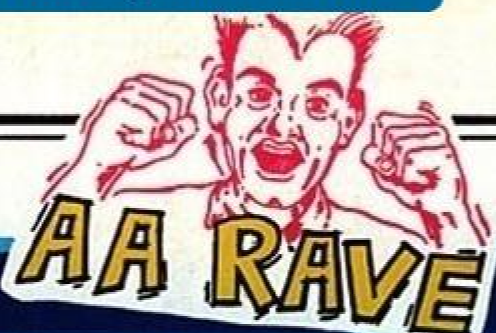


SOUTHERN BELLE

Hewson Consultants, £7.95 cass, keys only

'Live out your dreams' the cassette inlay promises as you drive a King Arthur class steam locomotive from London Victoria to Brighton. There are seven types of run presenting different problems but all are over the same 50 and 3/4 mile track through seven tunnels, numerous stations and landmarks.

The display shows you the view from the tender of the instruments in the cab and the track ahead. As the train moves you pass through the landscape, drawn in black and white and mostly bare. Tunnels, bridges, stations, permanent way workings, signals and Battersea power station all go by as you chuff along, smoke pouring out of the chimney.

The cab is full of displays to indicate the status of the engine but you don't have to control all of them. On the right of the screen are indications of the coal and water supplies, speed, the signal ahead, gradient, distance along track and time. There are nine controls to alter the performance of the engine, some of which you can leave to the computer if desired.

SECOND OPINION

Although not even I am old enough to remember steam-trains, I couldn't help feeling nostalgic about this game – perhaps because of those childhood train sets. It certainly makes a change from yet more flight simulators, and I for one would rather aim for Brighton than the stars.

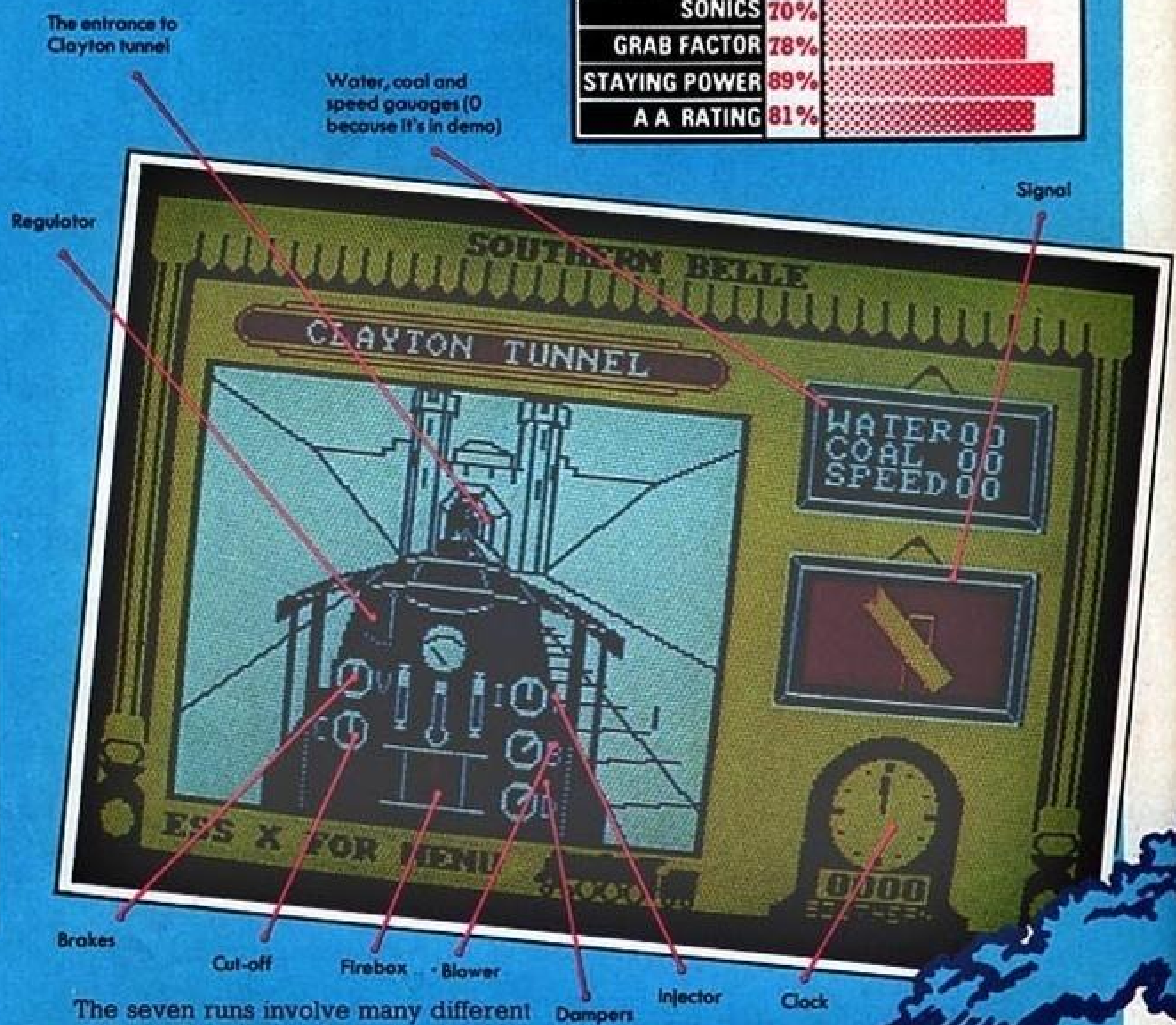
PC

The regulator, cut-off and vacuum brake are always under your control and determine the speed and partly the economy of a run. The regulator determines the amount of power to the wheels and thus the speed and acceleration. The cut-off works in tandem with it, determining how much steam enters the engine cylinders and thus how much power they produce and at what efficiency. The brake works on several levels from light, medium, heavy to emergency, although the company and passengers will object to the latter.

The next features you can introduce are the blower and whistle. The blower is used when the regulator is shut off or when the train is in a tunnel since it stops gases building up in the firebox and causing an explosive blowback into the cab. The normal passage of steam usually sucks gases out but the blower uses live steam when no steam is used for power and is therefore wasteful. The whistle is a warning device at tunnels and stations and, aside from being fun, wastes steam as well.

The injector and dampers are harder to use and control the water level in the boiler and the airflow to the fire. The water level must not get too high or low or disaster will result. The air flow controls the temperature of the fire (indicated by a thermometer), the rate of fuel consumption and the type of smoke produced. These are very tough to gauge and have to be kept a constant eye on.

The only other controls are the stoking of the fire and the opening of the firedoors. This also determines the temperature of the fire and economy of fuel use. Having mastered these controls you can start to worry about the hazards that face you.



The seven runs involve many different timetables and problems. Some runs involve fast economical running while others involve stopping at stations for passengers and at signals. Sections of the track have speed limits where you may derail if you speed and lots of other safety penalties can be incurred for bad stopping, failing to whistle or overshooting signals. At the end of each run you are marked for your timekeeping, economy and safety to produce an overall pass or fail.

The graphics are bare but adequate but the puffing noise is nice, even muffling in tunnels. The controls can be complicated to learn so this simulation won't appeal to all – but steam-train fanatics and simulation freaks will love it. The atmosphere is terrific (smell that smoke) and the options mean its got lots of lasting interest.

BW

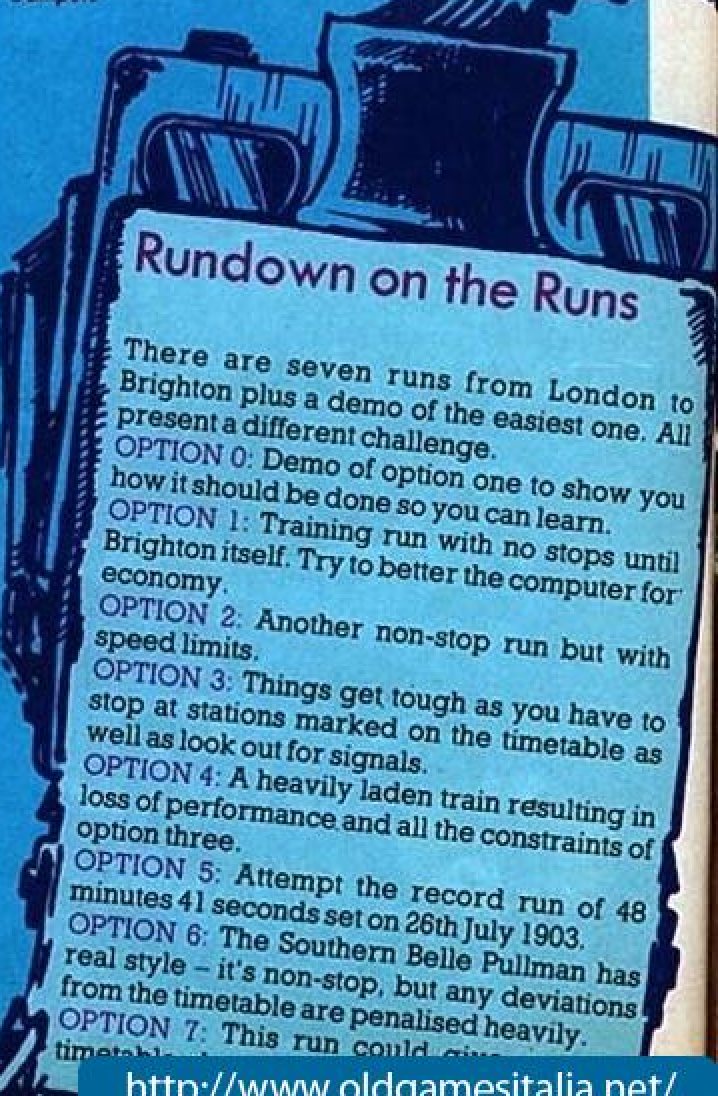
GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Marvellous atmosphere.**
- ▶ **The one and only steam-train simulation.**
- ▶ **Lots of options and runs.**
- ▶ **Tough game to master.**
- ▶ **If you like trains you'll love this.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Controls may be too complicated (too realistic?).**
- ▶ **May not appeal to all tastes.**

GRAPHICS	77%
SONICS	70%
GRAB FACTOR	78%
STAYING POWER	89%
A A RATING	81%



Rundown on the Runs

There are seven runs from London to Brighton plus a demo of the easiest one. All present a different challenge.

OPTION 0: Demo of option one to show you how it should be done so you can learn.

OPTION 1: Training run with no stops until Brighton itself. Try to better the computer for economy.

OPTION 2: Another non-stop run but with speed limits.

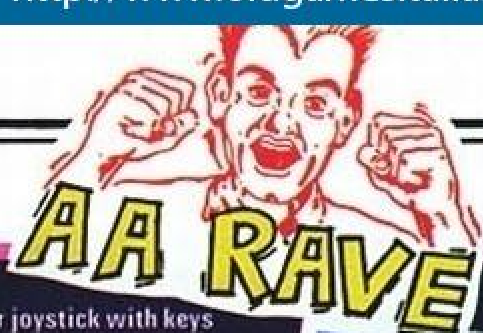
OPTION 3: Things get tough as you have to stop at stations marked on the timetable as well as look out for signals.

OPTION 4: A heavily laden train resulting in loss of performance and all the constraints of option three.

OPTION 5: Attempt the record run of 48 minutes 41 seconds set on 26th July 1903.

OPTION 6: The Southern Belle Pullman has real style – it's non-stop, but any deviations from the timetable are penalised heavily.

OPTION 7: This run could



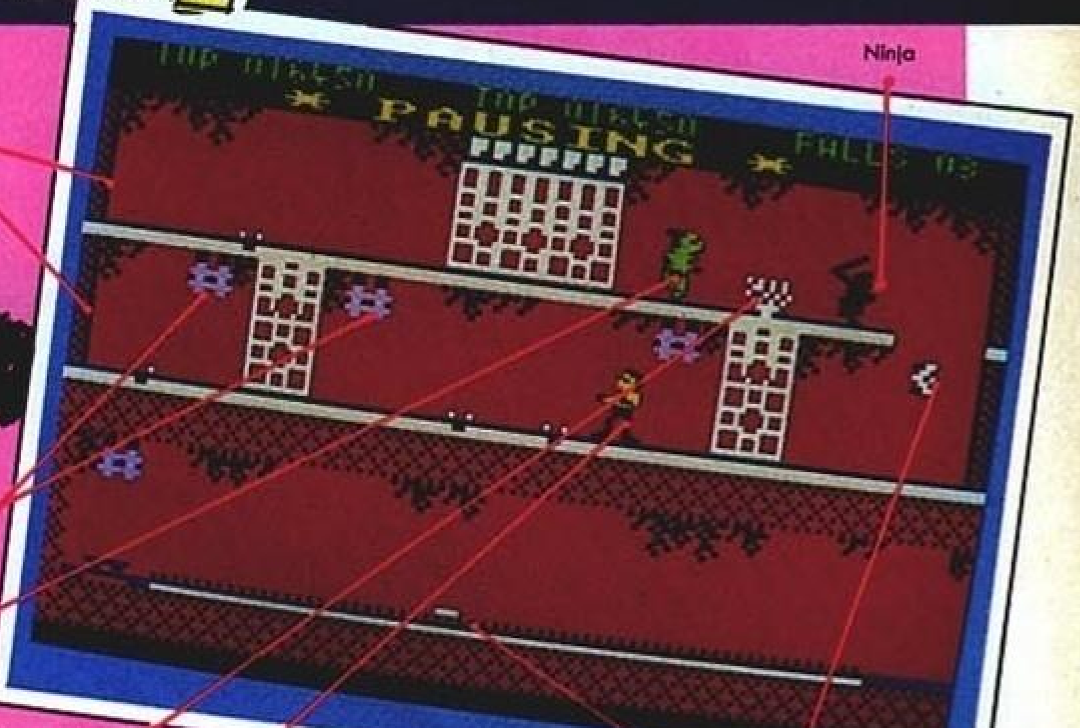
ACTION TEST

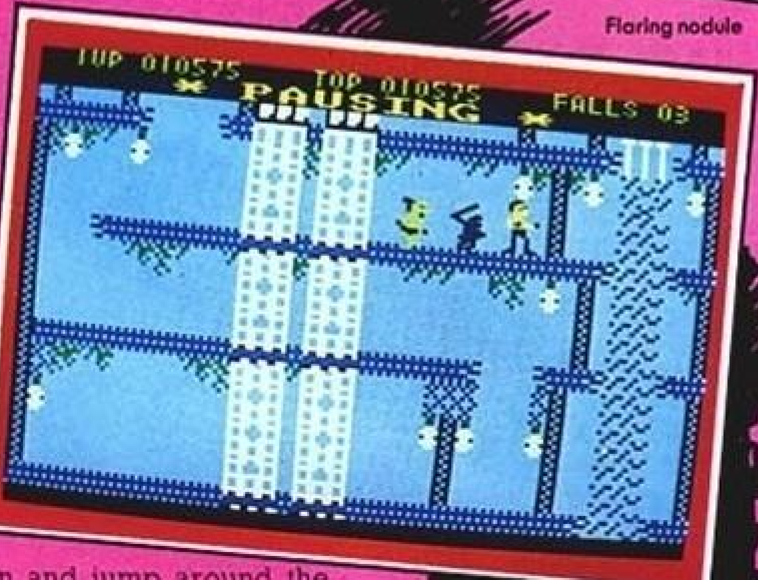
BRUCE LEE

US Gold/Amsoft, £9.95 cass, £12.95 disk, joystick or keys or joystick with keys

The immortal kung-fu hero comes to the Arnold in his own 20-screen platform game of kicking, punching and lantern collecting. His task is to destroy an evil wizard but to do this he has to make his way through the cunningly constructed rooms of a dangerous fortress opening doorways and using secret passages to reach his goal.

Each screen is beautifully designed with intricate features like mountain backgrounds, statues, platforms, ladders and ceilings. Hanging up are magic lanterns, ribbon-like decorations and even the odd yin-yang symbol. These are what Brucie has to collect in order to progress through the screens. Sometimes a single object may reveal an opening but collecting them all brings more points. The doors which can be removed are usually black frames or plugs in the floor but you need to watch carefully for what disappears to guide you onwards.





Bruce is threatened by Yamo and the Ninja, light beam and deadly spikes on the right.

Bruce can run and jump around the platforms to get the lanterns and fall any distance without harm. There are also many things he can climb up and down and he can even use secret passages to get about. Ladders, trellises and other frameworks can be clambered about on while lift-like light beams can carry you about.

You don't however have it all your own way. The two dangers that will dog your every step are Yamo and the Ninja. Yamo is a green giant of a warrior who will punch and flying kick you in an attempt to pose you a 'fall' (life). He may also pursue you between floors, climbing between levels to get at you.

The Ninja is dressed in black and wields a sword. He will take more blows to defeat Bruce than Yamo but is not to be trifled with. However he won't climb upwards to fight you, only descend through gaps. Both these foes can be dispatched by punching and kicking them, the Ninja with three blows and Yamo with four. This will make them disappear for a while but they keep coming back. If you just want to avoid them Bruce can duck down or leap past them. They may even help you out by fighting each other when on the same level with Bruce not in sight.

Non-moving objects can also be a danger and some are very devious. Many screens have little nodules in the floor and when Bruce, Yamo or the Ninja tread on them they are activated, spewing up deadly flame a second later. This can be used to advantage if you've got either of your adversaries on your tail, but in close quarter fighting it is easy to get caught yourself.

Other dangers are white spikes that wait to impale the careless fighter and lethal beams that shoot across gaps. An even nastier hazard is the little white dashes that zoom across the top of some floors waiting to chop Bruce down by the legs. Careful timing of jumps is needed to avoid these since they move very fast.

If you succeed in getting to the wizard he will explode leaving a triumphant Bruce to have a go at another, but harder, level. The screens are all colourful and well designed with some good animation on the characters. The sound effects consist of footsteps as you run and fighting sounds but there's a nice title tune. It all adds up to a real oriental smash.

BW

SECOND OPINION

If you just want a good scrap, Brucie won't really satisfy you. The figures are small and the fighting isn't very sophisticated. But the game is much more than a mere punch-up, giving you some intriguing platform action and problem solving in between your encounters with the fat Yamo and the sinister Ninja.

PC

The Two-Player Mode

When in two player mode an interesting new game dimension is added in that one player can take Yamo's role. The players alternate control of Bruce Lee, beginning where they last died, while the other player can control Yamo.

This means that the Yamo player can frustrate the other player if they both know the game well – furious fights (on-screen and off) may develop. You can't even be gentlemanly and let each other play unhindered since the computer will take control of Yamo if he's left standing around for too long. The only drawback to this option is that one player has to use keys.

GOOD NEWS

- **20 delightfully-drawn screens.**
- **Good animation and fight action.**
- **Devious routes and features.**
- **Very addictive and fast moving – like a good platform game should be.**
- **Intriguing two player option – particularly if both players know the game well.**

BAD NEWS

- **20 screens may not be enough for the hardened player.**
- **Sometimes hard to know what can and can't be climbed or collected.**

GRAPHICS	89%
SONICS	71%
GRAB FACTOR	92%
STAYING POWER	83%
A A RATING	88%

The originality factor

Some people seeing this game might conclude that it owes a lot to the Ultimate titles *Knight Lore* and *Alien 8*. There are certain similarities in the way the 3D graphics are achieved, similarities in the type of aliens used, and most importantly similarity in the way solid objects can be pushed around and used to work in your favour as shields or traps.

Of course being compared with Ultimate is no bad thing, but after you've played this game for a bit you realise the similarities are fairly superficial. *Highway Encounter* has a very different feel to it. The action is a good deal faster, and blasting aliens feels very different from dodging them. Vortex can justifiably claim a great deal of originality with this game.

HIGHWAY ENCOUNTER

Vortex £8.95 cass joystick or keys

MASTERGAME

This is an encounter of the closest kind providing more thrills and action than you may be able to cope with. The daunting task is to guide a super weapon along a peril-infested highway to destroy an alien base.

The highway runs from bottom left to top right of the screen, rather like the classic shoot-em-up *Zaxxon*. Moving past the edge of the screen causes the picture to flick to a new area of road – there are 30 sections in all before you reach the alien base. The road is composed of a trendy-looking grid and on either side appear picturesque scenes of gardens, woods and a bridge over a river. Later on this switches to a cave background as you reach zone zero.

You start at zone 30 with five 'vortons' and a 'lasertron' with which you must conquer the invading aliens. The vortons are Dalek-like robots that can shoot fiery balls out of their heads and scoot about the roadway. The lasertron is a deadly weapon that will destroy the alien stronghold at zone zero – if you can reach it.

SECOND OPINION

The beginning of the game is superb, as the Vortrons line up with the Lasertron for their arduous journey. The standard never lets up, and neither does the pressure. Spend too much time admiring the slinky graphics and you're a goner. But you'll probably be a goner anyway – it's a hard game to beat. The Vortrons are tricky to control and at moments of crisis it's almost impossible not to panic. Result – you turn the wrong way and get frazzled. Once you get used to the control you can make more progress. But in later zones I found the combination of aliens and defences just too much for my feebly slow responses. And five Vortons just wasn't enough.

PC

The vortons and lasertron begin by moving into formation in a line with four vortons behind the pyramid-shaped lasertron and the fifth out front under your control. This procession will move diagonally up to the top right of the screen except when blocked by other objects. The one free vorton can roam as it pleases clearing the way of objects and aliens.

Controlling this droid can be a little difficult since it follows the *Knight Lore* and *Alien 8* style of rotating left or right and then moving forward in the direction you're facing. This calls for a cool head so that you don't panic under pressure and charge aimlessly about in circles. Once mastered it works well although it will provide flashes of frustration.

The lasertron cannot be moved sideways and ploughs its way up the middle of the road, which you have to clear. This is, of course, easier said than done. Harmless obstacles like oildrums, brick blocks, clear blocks and floor patches may impede movement and have to be bumped or shot out of the way. Other more dangerous devices are the spiky balls and flame points.

Spiky balls bounce from side to side across the road and you either have to time a dash past them or interpose an object that they can bounce off, leaving a way clear. Flame points don't move but are often in strategic positions to make moving difficult. Both kill on contact.

When you do lose a life control is switched to one of the other vortons in the pack and you can move him out and into action. Vortons not under your control can also be killed if one of the many wandering aliens hits them. These aliens also kill the main vorton but can be blasted by him.

There are two main tactics that can be employed. Firstly you can escort the lasertron all the way taking each screen at a time, but this may lose you rearguard vortons as aliens stray into them. Alternatively you can keep them in reserve and pave the way ahead with a single vorton. This means advancing another robot every time you lose a life but it does keep the reserves well out of trouble.

You have to get to zone zero before a time limit runs out but the only other constraint on your activity is a power gauge that only allows you to fire in bursts of three bolts from the vorton. If you can get to zone zero the sequence that follows is well worth the effort and leaves you to complete another faster and harder run.

The 3D graphics are beautifully smooth and reminiscent of Ultimate's 'Filmation' but faster and with a lot more action. Sound is simple zapping effects. The instructions belie the brilliance of the game but from the terrific loading screen onwards it's sheer addiction.

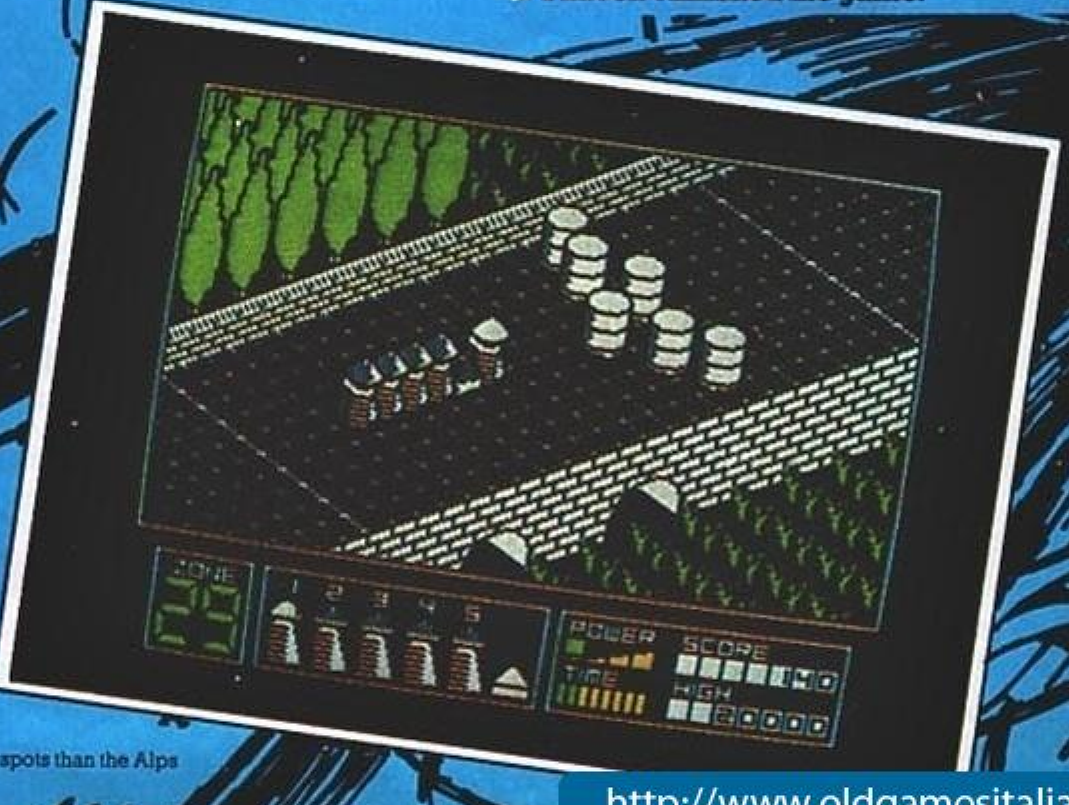
BW

G O O D   N E W S

- ▶ **Smooth 3D graphics.**
- ▶ **30 diabolical screens.**
- ▶ **Some nasty puzzles to solve.**
- ▶ **Great idea of pushing the lasertron with the extra vortons.**
- ▶ **Nice range of mean aliens.**
- ▶ **Real addiction in getting through the screens.**
- ▶ **Exceptionally tough to solve.**

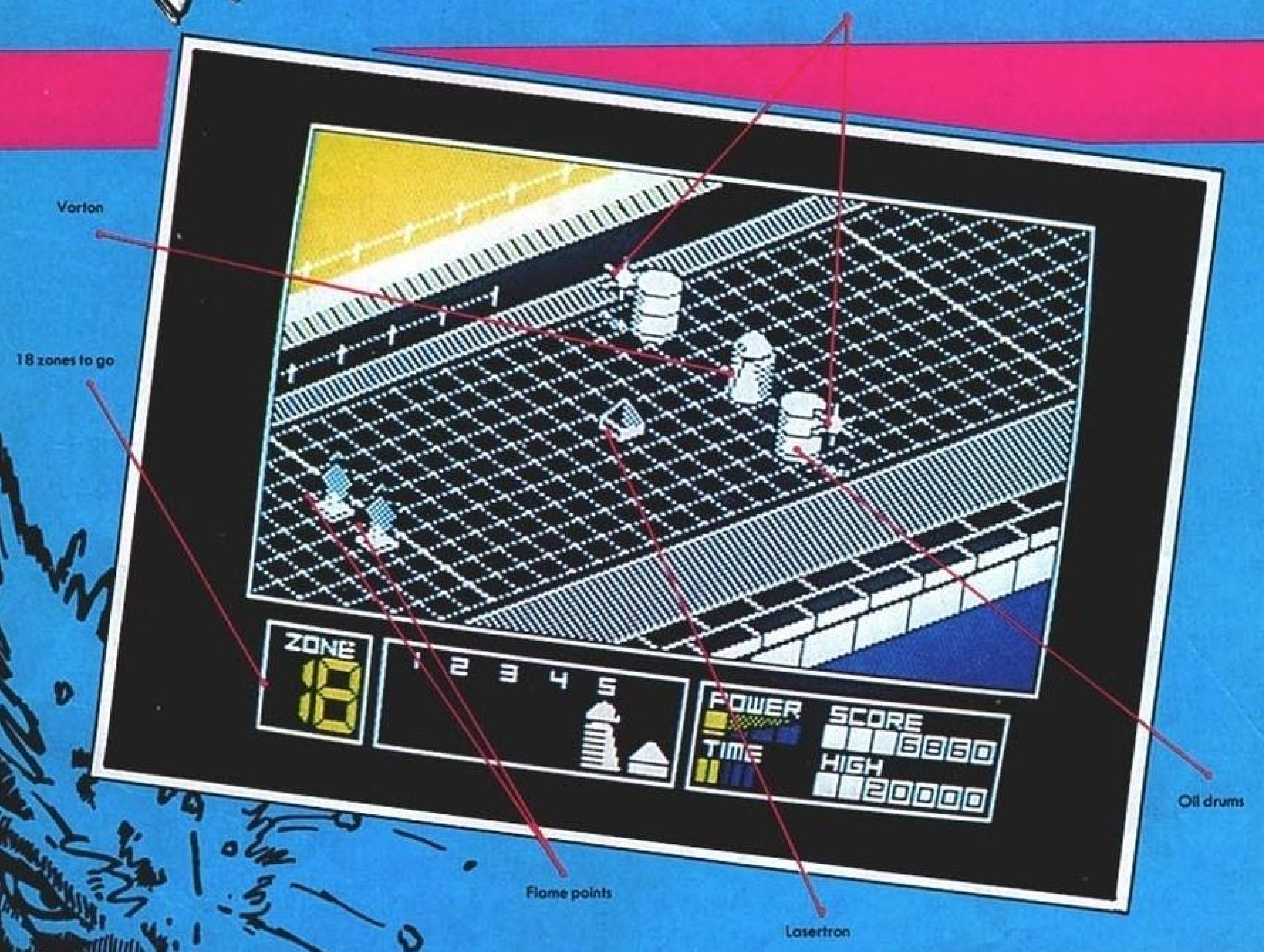
B A D   N E W S

- ▶ **Control may take time to adjust to.**
- ▶ **I haven't finished the game.**



Your procession lines up at the start with you being the lead Vorton

More high-spots than the Alps


Spiky balls (trapped)
Vorton
18 zones to go
ZONE
18
1 2 3 4 5
POWER
TIME
SCORE
6860
HIGH
20000
Oil drums
Flame points
Lasertron

GRAPHICS	97%	
SONICS	57%	
GRAB FACTOR	95%	
STAYING POWER	93%	
A A RATING	95%	

The Alien Menace

There are several types of alien defence device but all are fatal on contact. Some are cleverer than others and home in or try to avoid you if you're facing them. However when a swarm suddenly appear it makes little difference – just blast them. Vortex haven't given them any names so we've christened them ourselves.

CYCLOPS SCANNERS: single eye on a stalk. Can't float over objects.

FLOATING SCANNERS: eye attached to a floating lump. Can pass over floor plates.

GLOBE MOUTHS: spherical beasts that look like mutant Pacmen. Don't float.

HOVERING PLATES: look like spinning aspirins but move very fast and over objects to get at you.

SPIKY BALLS: move from side to side across the road. Can be blocked by an object but can't be shot.

FLAME POINTS: always stationary and throwing up bursts of fire. Can't be destroyed.

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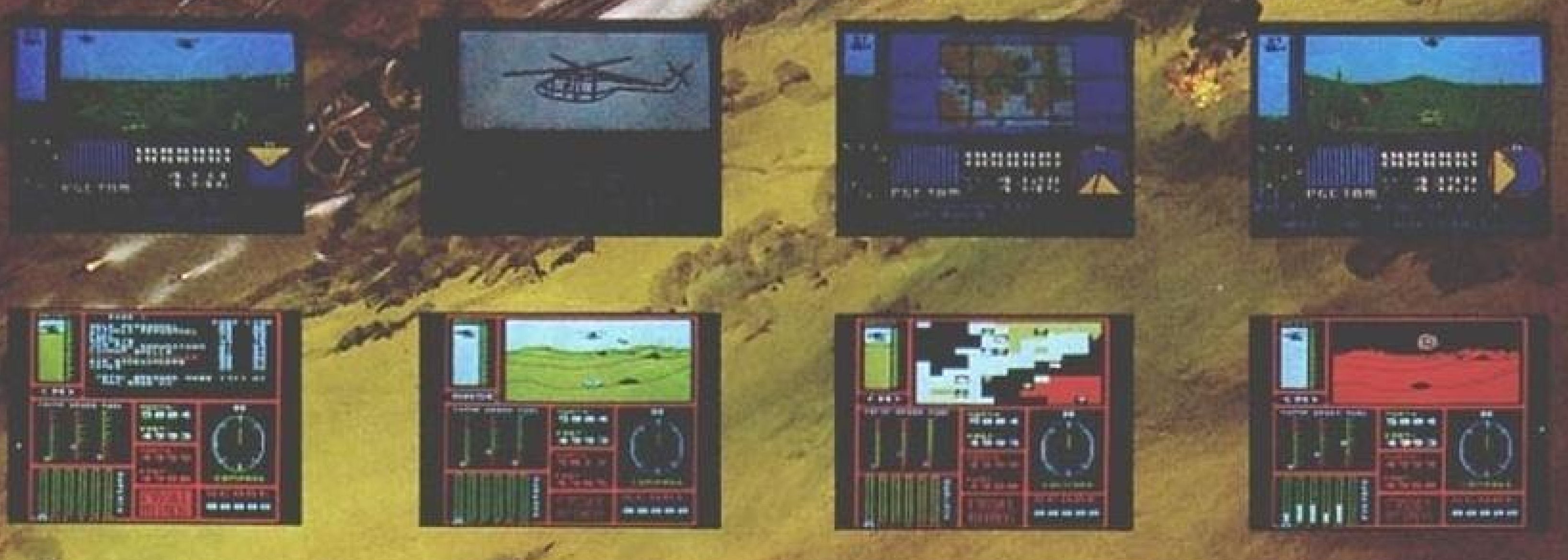
AMSTRAD
BBC/ELECTRON

DURELL sales dept.,
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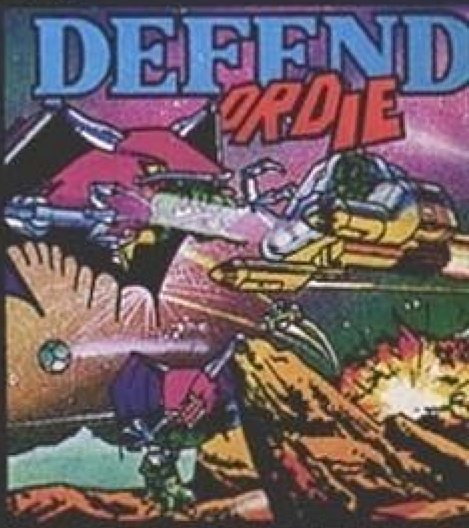
ALLIGATA FOR

AMSTRAD

DOPPLEGANGER



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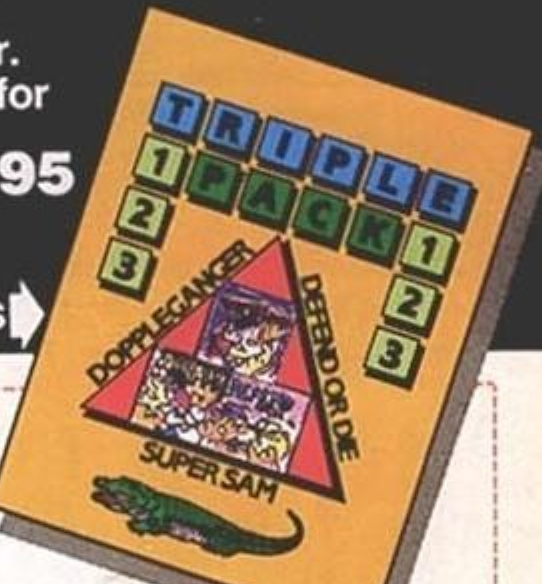

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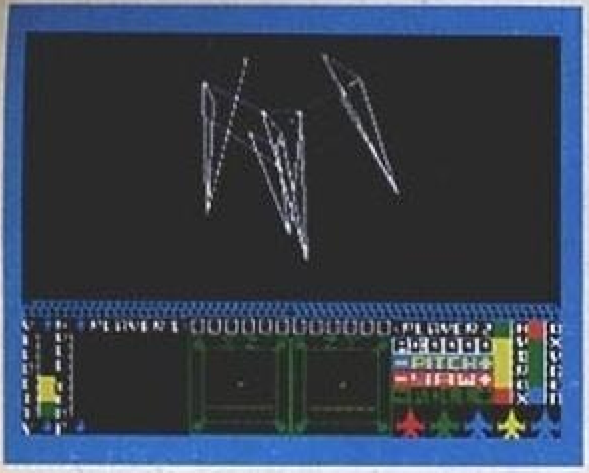
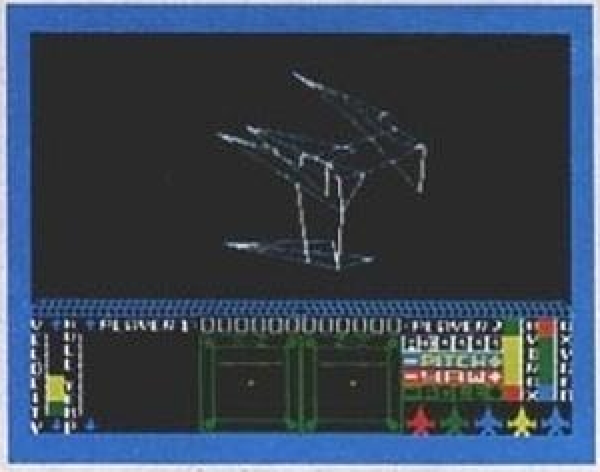
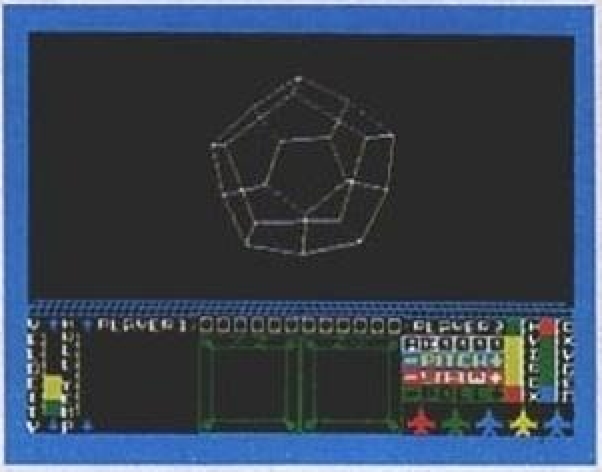

PLAYER 1
PLAYER 2
PITCH
YAW


PLAYER 1
PLAYER 2
PITCH
YAW

Spaceflight epic


PLAYER 1
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PITCH
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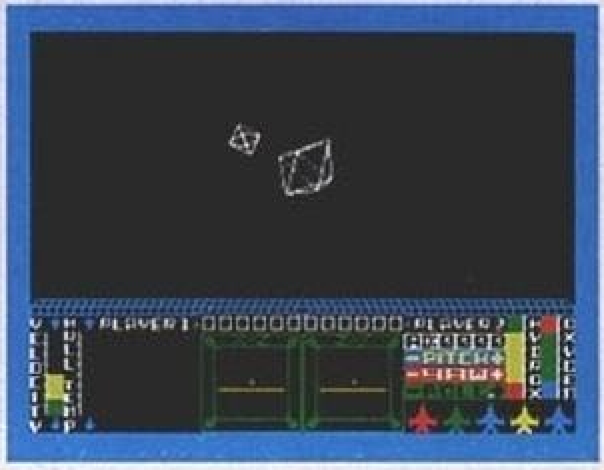
PLAYER 1
PLAYER 2
PITCH
YAW

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COMMODOR

SCREENPLAY

Macmillan Software, £8.95, keys

This is a graphics package with a difference. It doesn't just give you the opportunity to create pretty pictures but to turn them into animated cartoons as well. You can also produce a soundtrack and words to go with the sequences to make a complete film.

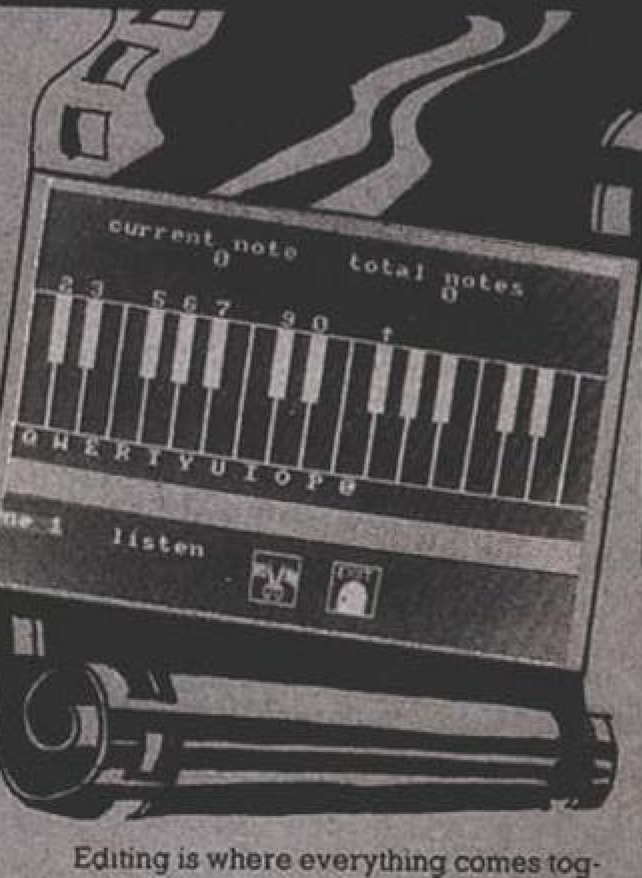
A booklet details all the film techniques that are used in film and TV and then shows you how to use the software to produce animation of your own. The program is split into five major sections which combine to make the finished product.

The first section is known as wordshot and allows you to put captions on the action as for a silent movie or dubbed words on a foreign film. The lettering scrolls across the bottom of the screen as the action takes place above and can be composed of up to ten 'pages'. The text can be in normal or italic face and you can change the colour, size and direction of type to suit the purpose.

Having got your storyboard and dialogue you can create the scene in which the action takes place. This can be created with a number of graphic functions like line drawing, boxes, triangles, circles, different colours, shape filling and different thicknesses of pens. This background can be used for all the action or just a blank screen.

Now the sprites that make up the animation are drawn. There can be up to eight sprites with two forms making up the animation. Various colours, copying and mirroring techniques can be used in producing the sprites but they are of limited size. This means that to animate large objects you have to combine several sprites to make a whole at the editing stage.

Before getting to that a soundtrack can be added. This can be composed of up to four tunes which you can knock out on the keyboard. The notes are played off the keyboard and put together into sequences using record, rhythm, forward note and back note controls. These can also be inserted at the editing stage.



Editing is where everything comes together. You can decide what background to use, where the sprites should move, what the storyline is and what music to play. These can be combined in many different ways and for various time periods. Experimentation is the best way of discovering the possibilities with the main limitation being the ability to only record 10 sequences at a time.

For a more permanent and lengthy record you can video sequences, using the RS Modulator and a video recorder to make long sequences of film. If you don't already have them though it seems rather an expensive add-on to make. This is because although the end result very much depends on you the potential of the software is still quite limited. Certainly good for playing about with and if you spend enough time you can produce some entertaining films.

BW

SECOND OPINION

This program gives you a lot of scope for creativity – but you'll really need to put in some time. It's not the sort of thing you can sit down at and get instant rewards from. Another problem is that without the modulator and video you won't be able to store very much at all: but it's still an intriguing package.

PC

GOOD NEWS

- **Plenty of scope for producing different sequences.**
- **Some reasonable graphic and sound handling.**
- **Good booklet to go with it.**

BAD NEWS

- **Animation is hardly up to Disney standards.**
- **Sequences are quite short if you don't have an RS Modulator and video.**

GRAPHICS	58%
SONICS	56%
GRAB FACTOR	54%
STAYING POWER	72%
A A RATING	65%

TRIVIA UK

Anirog, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

I like a good quiz. It dredges up some interesting stuff from the murky depths of the memory. Before I played this game I didn't know that I knew the name of the plant from which linseed oil is made. Of course, I'm no better off for knowing, or even for knowing that I knew. But the point of a quiz is to be trivial, and this program is certainly that.

It's also an Amstrad first – as far as I know it's the only quiz available for the machine. With 1400 questions there should be enough to stretch the knowledge of all but the most compendious memories.

The brain-teasers are spread over six categories, which should give everybody a fair crack of the questionmaster's whip. But, as in the board-game *Trivial Pursuit*, you can't choose your topic – this is determined by the roll of the dice. If you're unlucky you could repeatedly land on a square whose topic you know nothing about.

You might, for instance, stop on a History square and find yourself trying to answer 'From whom did Thomas Jefferson make the Louisiana Purchase in 1803?' If you're clued up enough to know the answer to that – France – you could still be a little more puzzled by 'How many tricks are there in a Grand Slam at bridge?'

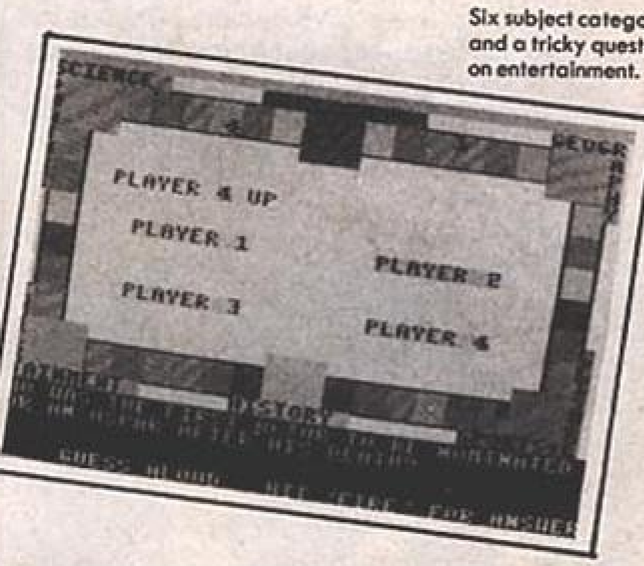
Trivia UK is a game for at least two players, since there's not much point in playing on your own if your opponent (the computer) is a real know-all. The virtue of playing with others is that you don't have to type the answers and so can't make the minor spelling errors that would allow the computer to tell you that you'd got it wrong.

One additional feature of the program is a customising facility for the user to build up his or her own database of questions. Anirog imagine some jolly goings-on: 'Just watch Dad's face going pink as the computer asks Mum's birthday!' But it seems to me that this is not the sort of thing that should be en-

SECOND OPINION

Good to see a quiz game making an appearance and despite the poor display the question answering is quite fascinating. When played in a group it's fun although it would be easy to make a mistake when answering and thus muck up the game. Probably won't be as much of a cult as the board game but provides some good entertainment.

BW



Six subject categories and a tricky question on entertainment.

'MOVE OVER

couraged by software houses.

While the amount and spread of questions are good, the presentation of *Trivia* leaves much to be desired. The board display is dull and rather unclear, the sound a successsion of beeps and burps. This is a pity, since it surely wouldn't have been hard to come up with something much more attractive for what is fundamentally a good game.

PC

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Lots of questions.**
- ▶ **No text entry.**
- ▶ **Add your own questions.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Dull graphics.**
- ▶ **And sound.**

GRAPHICS	30%
SONICS	25%
GRAB FACTOR	65%
STAYING POWER	71%
A A RATING	55%

VALUE PACK

Tynesoft, £6.95 cass, joystick or keys

Remember those arcade classics *Pacman* and *Donkey Kong*? Well somebody's finally put them on the Amstrad and both in the same package. The former features a dot-gobbling monster and the latter a girl-kidnapping gorilla. *Munch-it* is the familiar dot-gobbling monster chomping his way around mazes. His task is to get all the dots on screen without being caught by the four ghosts that also roam around. Each dot is worth points and bigger bonuses are available.

Usually if you run into a ghost it costs a life but if one of four power pills is munched you have a short period of time in which to get the four ghosts. These give healthy bonuses but the ghosts reappear after a time to dog your path again.

If you can grab all the dots you move to a different maze with a whole batch of dots to munch again. There are only five different layouts, some being a lot easier than others.

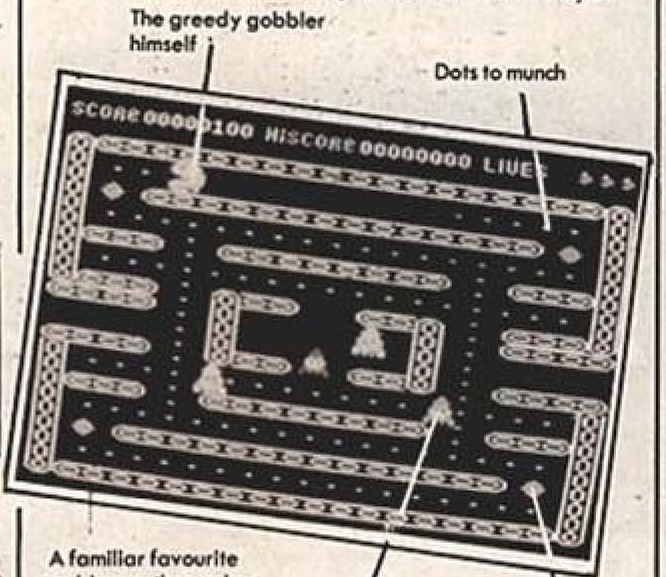
SECOND OPINION

Pack, yes. Value, no.

PC

Climb-it stars a little chappie trying to rescue his girlfriend from the clutches of a gorilla. This he has to do over four screens of action in which the ape will do everything in his power to stop you. On each screen you start at the bottom and have to work up to the top – just like life – where the ape waits with your girlfriend.

On each screen you can move about using ladders, walkways, lifts and conveyor belts. There are often goodies left lying around that can be picked up for bonus points. However there are also rolling barrels, fires, pies and bouncing beams that will kill you and you'll have to start at the bottom of the screen again. Some of these can be dealt with with hammers that you can grab others will have to be avoided or jumped over.


The greedy gobbler himself
Dots to munch
SCORE 00000100 HISCORE 00000000 LIVES
Ghosts
Power pills

A familiar favourite as big mouth munches dots

At the end of the first three screens when you reach your girlfriend the gorilla steals her away again but at the end of the fourth the ape is toppled and you get back your girl.

The programming of these two old games leaves something to be desired with some rather crude graphics and animation. The playability is also suspect and even with both games for £6.95 it isn't particularly good value.

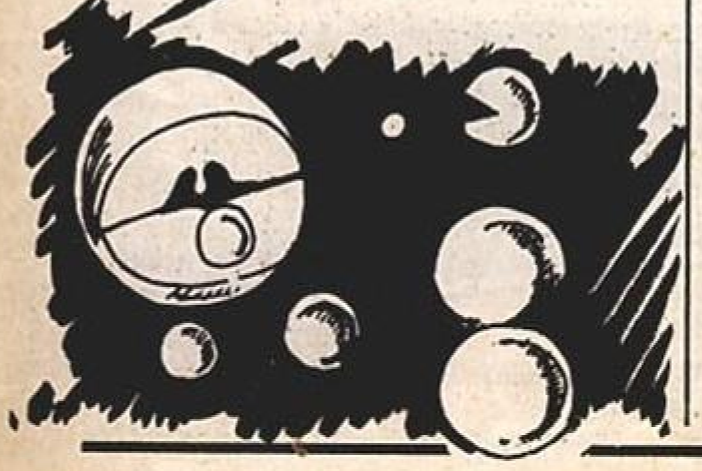
BW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Two popular old games.**
- ▶ **Some pleasant old memories of hours spent standing in arcades.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Poor graphics and animation.**
- ▶ **Overpriced even with two games for £6.95.**



DOPPLEGANGER

Alligata, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Doppelganger is German for a double – this game features a sorceress and her alter ego in their quest to recover five ingots of precious metal. The two persona each have to complete tasks in order to finish the game and frequent switches between them are needed.

The twins start in the same location of a 25 room castle with only one of them able to move at a time. The alter ego appears as a green transparent figure with the real self being more solid. The castle rooms are in 3D with doors, making moving around much like it is in *Knight Lore* or *Alien 8*. There is only one door out of the start room and this is where the ingots have to be returned.

Each double can move through particular types of door and thereby access different areas of the castle. The sorceress can pass through blue- framed doors while her partner can pass through green-framed doors. Both can pass through white-framed doors and, if they have the right key, through the various colour-coded locked doors.

Keys, ingots and other objects are found lying around the castle and are picked up by just moving over them. The ingots simply have to be returned to the start room but other objects may take some figuring out. A shield, book and a candle-like object are all to be found but what use they are is for you to work out.

As you make your way through the castle many nasty creatures may be encountered and have to be dealt with. Spiders are a real problem since they will chase after the sorceress from room to room sapping her energy. This is represented by an hour glass which if it runs out will end the game. Spiders don't chase the alter ego though so a quick switch can get you out of a sticky situation.

In some rooms armoured heads or demons may move in patterns across the floor and running into these will also drain energy. Danger can also be found beneath you in the form of floor plates and arrows that run across rooms. There is a way to replenish

- ▶ **Very unoriginal (at least they didn't do *Space Invaders* as well).**
- ▶ **Gameplay is simple and repetitive.**
- ▶ **Nostalgia's OK but not when the games are worse than the originals.**

GRAPHICS	40%
SONICS	35%
GRAB FACTOR	38%
STAYING POWER	27%
A A RATING	33%

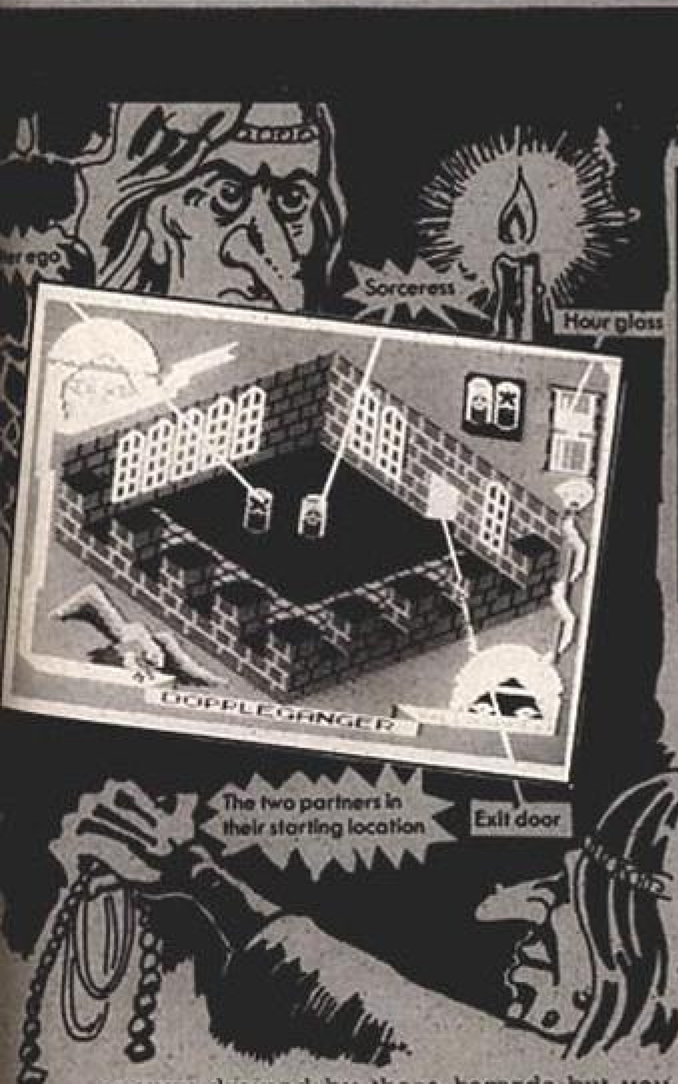
VAGAN ATTACK

Atlantis, £1.99 cass, keys only

Star Trek was one of the earliest and most popular computer games – and some of us still enjoy the odd game. This latest version sticks to the original format, ignoring fancy graphics, and sells for a rather attractive price.

The invading aliens are the Vagans and

http://www.oldgamesitalia.net/ http://www.oldgamesitalia.net/



energy drained by these hazards but you have to find the right room and be controlling the right character.

The most dangerous foe will give you no time at all to replenish energy since it kills on the spot. The Gorgon's head must be avoided at all costs unless you know how to prevent it killing the sorceress. Aspects like this add the necessary element to stop this being a simple collection game and turn it into more of an arcade adventure.

The graphics are quite intriguing, as is the actual gameplay, but it probably won't manage to get you really hooked since it isn't really large enough. A definite challenge that may take a few pleasant hours to solve.

BW

SECOND OPINION

A very pretty game that just fails to make the grade, mainly because it's too small to pose the long-term challenge a player wants from an arcade adventure. The graphics are well up to scratch, although the figures themselves are a little cut-out. Very nice music at the start, but poor game-sounds.

PC

GOOD NEWS

- **Interesting room graphics and characters.**
- **Novel dual character control and switching.**
- **Adventure elements that will take some solving.**

BAD NEWS

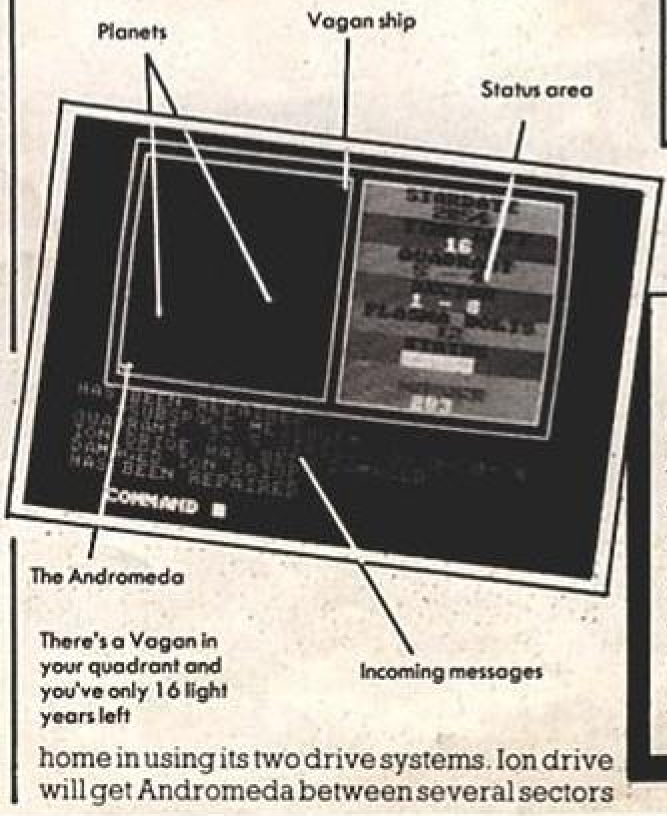
- **Movement control can be difficult.**
- **25 screens may not be enough to keep you happy.**
- **A few more clues and object identities would be nice.**

GRAPHICS	72%
SONICS	58%
GRAB FACTOR	62%
STAYING POWER	64%
A A RATING	63%

you command the starship Andromeda, Earth's last hope. The battle takes place in an 8x8 galaxy with each of the 64 quadrants also split into 64 sectors. Located within this area are the Vagan ships and starbases, all of which you have to destroy. The number of aliens depends on which of the nine levels of game is chosen, as does the number of starbases supporting you.

The ship begins in a random quadrant and sector in the galaxy. The screen shows either the quadrant, long range chart or galactic chart on the left and a series of figures on the right. These inform you of the status of the ships stardate, time left, quadrant, sector, plasma bolts, quadrant status and energy. At the bottom of the screen is space for entering commands and receiving sub-space messages about the situation.

You will have been given the information on how many Vagans there are and how long you have to destroy them. First you have set about finding them, then getting to them and then blasting them into space dust. Aliens can be found on the quadrant or long range charts. These also show starbases, planets and vagan bases. Once found the ship can home in using its two drive systems. Ion drive will get Andromeda between several sectors while Tetron drive warps it quickly between quadrants.


Planets
Vagan ship
Status area
The Andromeda
There's a Vagan in your quadrant and you've only 16 light years left
Incoming messages

When in a sector containing enemy ships there are three ways of disposing of them. The most effective is plasma bolts that destroy with only one hit. Lasers are also useful and you have to specify direction for both weapons and strength of the lasers. The lasers will often take several hits to work but an anti-matter bomb will destroy the contents of a whole quadrant, including you if you're still in it. You only have one bomb so save it for heavily infested areas.

Starbases are dotted around and moving adjacent to them docks the ship and replenishes energy and plasma bolts. Like the Andromeda these can also be destroyed by enemy fire and you need to watcn out for the enemy bases that fire powerful plasma bolts.

The game can have one of three endings – the destruction of the Andromeda, running out of time or succesfully completing your mission. There's nothing very new in the gameplay, graphics, sound or anything else but it brought back pleasant memories of games of *Star Trek* played on my old school's Research Machines 380Z and for £1.99 it's not a bad little game.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Nice nostalgic memories.**
- **Quite a tough game task – the years haven't dulled the alien menace.**
- **Cheap.**

BAD NEWS

- **Very unoriginal.**
- **Graphics and sound are very simple.**
- **Not enough detail on galactic map – even after long-range scanning.**

GRAPHICS	26%
SONICS	18%
GRAB FACTOR	48%
STAYING POWER	56%
A A RATING	55%

SECOND OPINION

Once again the Federation had been caught by a surprise Vagan attack. Once again I alone stood in the way of Vagan domination of the galaxy. Once again I had only 55 star years to complete my task. Once again there seemed little to say about a game that is completely unoriginal – except that, at the price, it's pretty good value.

PC

ACTION TEST

THE DEVIL'S CROWN

Probe Software, £9.99 cass, £13.99 disk, joystick or keys

Sorcery was such a succesful game that it was inevitable that look-alikes would appear. Such is this game. That's no discredit to it though because in the new surroundings of a sunken pirate ship it succeeds in living up to the magical classic and perhaps bettering it.

The pirate ship consists of 40 rooms which are all bursting with colour and action. Within each one lurk treasures, tools and deadly enemies which you'll quickly come to recognise. The aim is to recover seven jewels from the bowels of the ship and replace them in a cursed golden crown.

You start on the main deck in a one man submersible that can scoot around all over the screen. At the top of the screen are three flashing objects which you have to find and put into place *Knight Lore*-style. The three objects are always identical, three bells to start with, and when put in place they reveal one of the seven jewels. This then has to be found and also returned to the main deck where it is installed in the crown.

SECOND OPINION

You'll have to repel boarders pretty sharpish once your friends see this. Keep a cutlass handy. It has unusually pretty graphics and flicks from screen to screen very smoothly. The blasting is quite satisfying, but the arcade adventure side is what makes it a superior product. Probe are a new company to me, but I hope t hear a lot more of them in the future.

PC

For each jewel the three objects to make it appear are different. Even once it's appeared you still have to find it and be carrying the right object to pick it up. In situations like this a map is invaluable so it's best to keep track of everything for later reference.

This main task is of course complicated by lots of minor problems – like dying. This is because you need a constant supply of oxygen (underwater remember?) and running out ends the game. Oxygen is found lying around in canisters that replenish your supply but it is constantly being drained. In many rooms there are fish who will take a massive chunk of air if they catch you. These can be shot but they are intelligent and shy away when you start attacking them.

Shooting is one of the major differences from *Sorcery* and picking up pistols lying around will top up the supply of bullets to 50. Other hazards are not so easy to deal with. Ghosts appear in some rooms and have the nasty habit of stealing the object you're carrying when bumped into. They disappear as soon as they've swapped and to get the object back you have to leave and re-enter the room to bump into the ghost again. The problem is the ghost may give you the deadly jolly roger. You can get rid of the ghost but you'll need to find out which object does the trick.

Most rooms are packed with objects like bells, jugs, coins, lanterns, ivory tusks and the like which can be picked up. Much of the scenery is composed of the ship's wooden hull with cannons, cannonballs, bunks and lots of other features. There are also continuous streams of bubbles rising from spots all over the ship but they serve no useful purpose – they just look good.

The task is made tougher in some rooms by the fact that it is pitch black and all you can see is yourself, fish and ghosts. Again there is a way to illuminate the problem but you'll have to find it. There are several surprises in store when you pick things up so watch out for pleasure and pain when you get the musical harp and jewels.

This won't be an easy game to complete and the fab graphics and sound add to the addiction. Despite its unoriginality this is worthy of going in anyone's collection.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **40 very colourful screens.**
- ▶ **A very tough game task.**
- ▶ **Nice combination of adventuring, exploration and shoot-em-up.**
- ▶ **Easy control making good gameplay.**
- ▶ **Good graphics and sound.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Some unoriginal aspects of the game.**

GRAPHICS	94%
SONICS	75%
GRAB FACTOR	85%
STAYING POWER	89%
A A RATING	87%

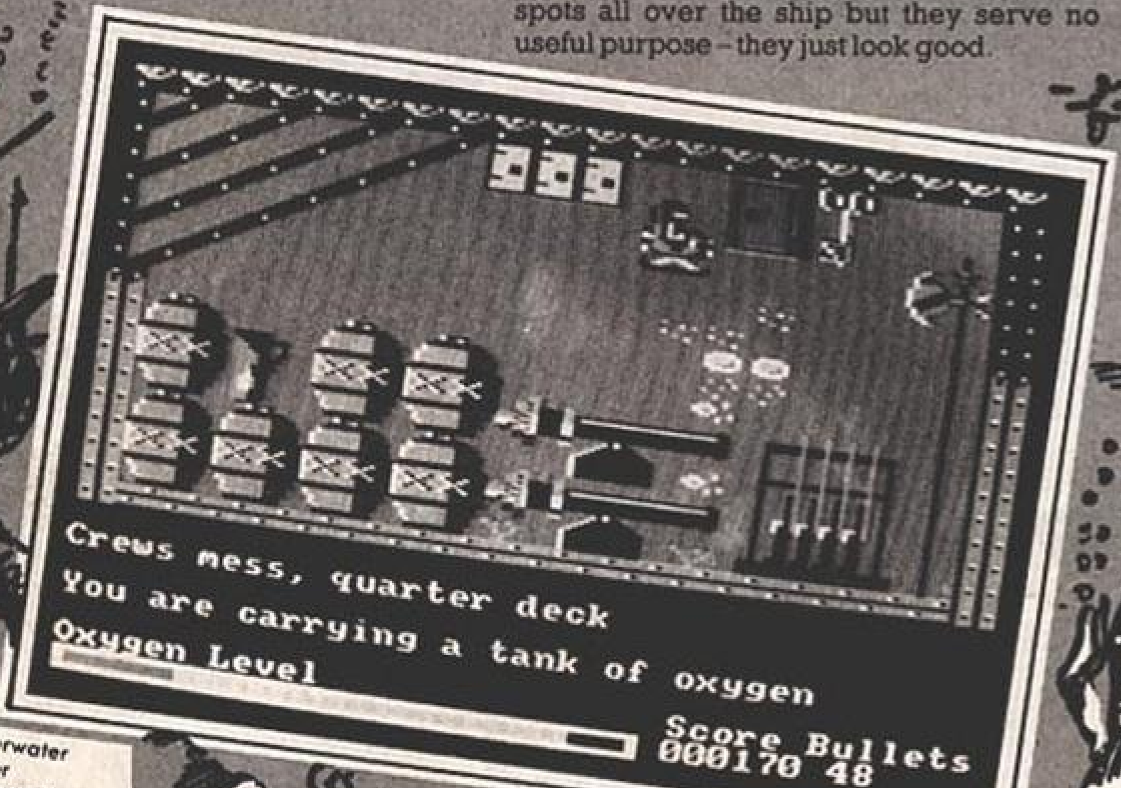
A Sorcery Copy?

Many aspects of the game are reminiscent of *Sorcery*. The way you move around, use doors to get between rooms (the creaking noise is exactly the same) and pick up and swap objects. On the face of it it's just a copy.

If you go deeper into it though you find many differences that make this a rave in its own right. The shooting is the most noticeable as you can blast away in true zapping fashion. Next is the main game task which is like *Knight Lore* in finding objects and returning them to a single location. This makes the task a much different challenge requiring new game techniques.

There are as well the special features like the black rooms and object -stealing ghosts that are also added difficulties to cope with. It's obvious what inspired the game but it succeeds in being diff

well



```
Crews mess, quarter deck
You are carrying a tank of oxygen
Oxygen Level
                          Score Bullets
                          000170 48
```

Your underwater adventurer encounters another colourful screen in the heart of the sunken ship.

RUN A GREMLIN THROUGH YOUR AMSTRAD

OCCO
D action as you take on the allenge of a lifetime against MBEL-LIN, TED MATARE, NSEN SINO and FIGHTER ULL. Emerge victorious from l 4 rounds and you'll have ore than earned the WORLD HAMPIONSHIP CROWN.

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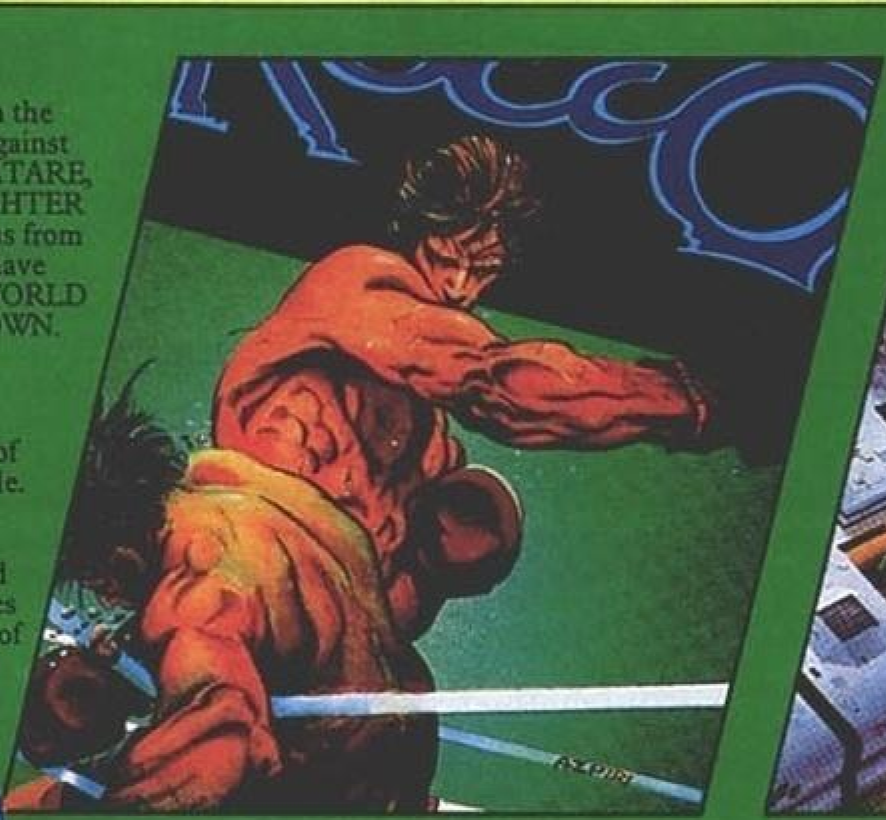

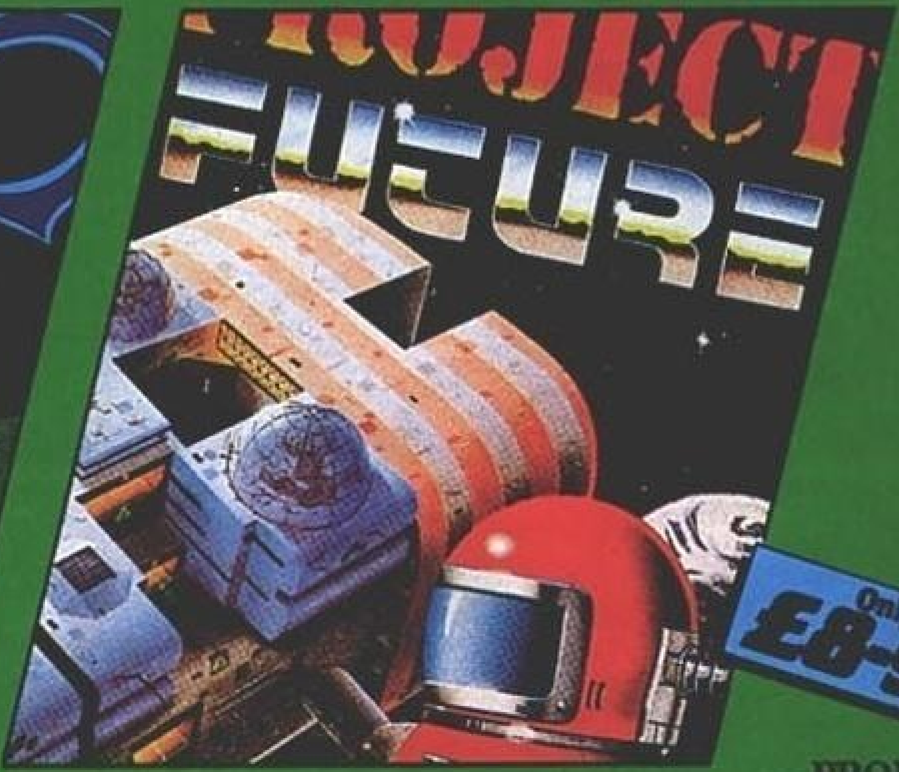

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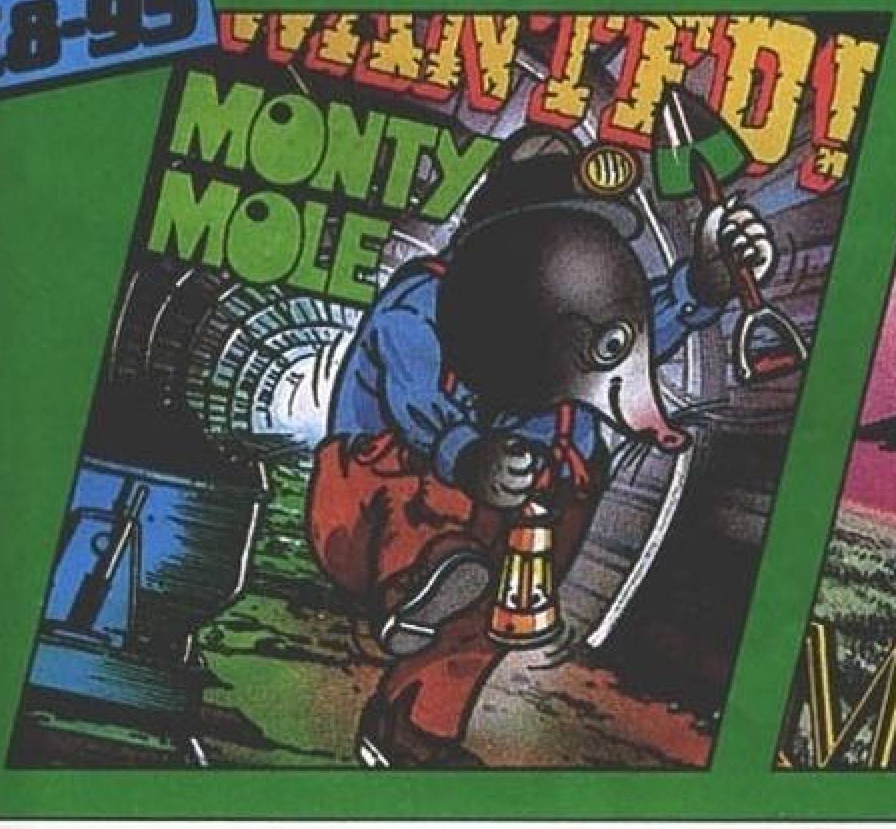

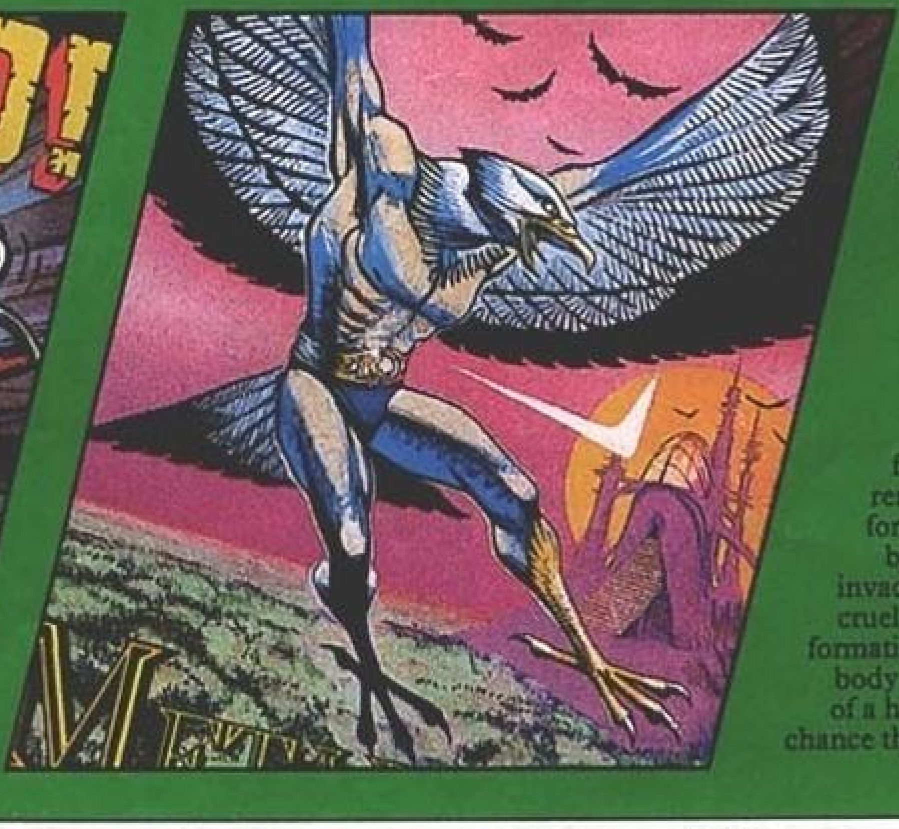

PROJECT FUTURE
Your mission to teleport aboard and activate the Self Destruct System of the dreaded SS FUTURE. The SS FUTURE is a huge labyrinth of a Space Ship covering 256 screens of the most amazing graphics.

METABOLIS
Before your eyes your friends, your family are rendered helpless, transformed to lesser beings – birds and mice – by the invading Kremins. But by a cruel twist of fate the transformation leaves you with the body of a bird but the brain of a human. You are the last chance the human race has left.

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MATCHDAY

Ocean, £8.95 cass, joystick, joystick with keys or keys

The first football simulation on Arnold was *World Cup* from Artic and initially this doesn't look that different. However once you realise the depth of extra features and gameplay it really stands out as a terrific program.

The action takes place on a 3D scrolling pitch with a goal at either end. The display is similar to *World Cup* and *Slapshot* with pitch markings and a crowd at the top of the screen. The teams are made up of seven players and a goalkeeper, with three in defence, one in midfield and three in attack. These allocations are not rigid, though, and players can dribble the ball anywhere on the field.

The matches can take two general formats, either a one-off game or an eight team knockout competition. Games can be played over a duration of 10, 30 or 90 minutes and are split into two halves. They can also be played against the computer or an opponent with the computer having three levels of skill.

The cup competition can have up to eight players taking part in the tournament but a single player can battle it out with the eight computer teams if he wants to. All of these options as well as strip colours, team names and controls are selected before the game begins.

The players emerge to the *Match of the Day* theme music (old version) and line up on the pitch with you having a view of the centre circle. Then comes the kick-off and it's all action from there on. The aim, Brian, is obviously to put the ball in the back of the net. There are many features that may help you do this.

SECOND OPINION

This is probably the only chance you'll get this year to hear the Match of the Day theme tune, so make the most of it. The graphics are very pretty, even if it looks like Wolves v. Man Utd. each time, and the movement is smooth enough for you to display your silky skills. If you've got any. This is a game that should go straight to the top of the table.

PC

A player in possession of the ball can dribble it along but if he encounters an opponent he may be blocked or have the ball stolen off him. You always control the player on your side with possession. If the other team have the ball then you control the player who is nearest the ball or towards whom the ball is heading. This is indicated by the player's boots turning brown instead of the usual black.

The ball can be kicked around either in the air or on the ground but either way you can gain control of it by running into it when it is on the ground or after chesting it down. The

Not Just Kick and Run

There are several features of the game that make it more than just a kick and run simulation – it takes skill as well.

HEADING: You can bounce a ball in the air off your head and even keep it up there for a while, although guiding it is difficult.

THROW-INS: The computer recognises who last touched the ball before it went out of play and awards throw-ins accordingly. You can aim the ball in several directions as it is raised above the player's head and then throw it. N.B. you can't score direct from a throw-in.

GOAL KICKS: Occur when the ball goes over the end line but not in the goal. They are taken from the correct side of the six yard box.

KICK OFFS: From the centre circle.

OWN GOALS: If you're careless enough or unlucky you can put the ball in your own net – it's all the same to the scoreboard.

POSTS: You can actually bounce the ball off the posts or the crossbar, but you may be able to follow it up.

CORNERS: Taken from the opposition's corner flag so that you can knock it into their area for incoming attackers.

TRAPPING THE BALL: skilled players can intercept a bouncing ball just as it hits the turf and trap it, enabling them to then dribble it.

RAID

US Gold, £8.95 cass. (disk from Amsoft), joystick or keys

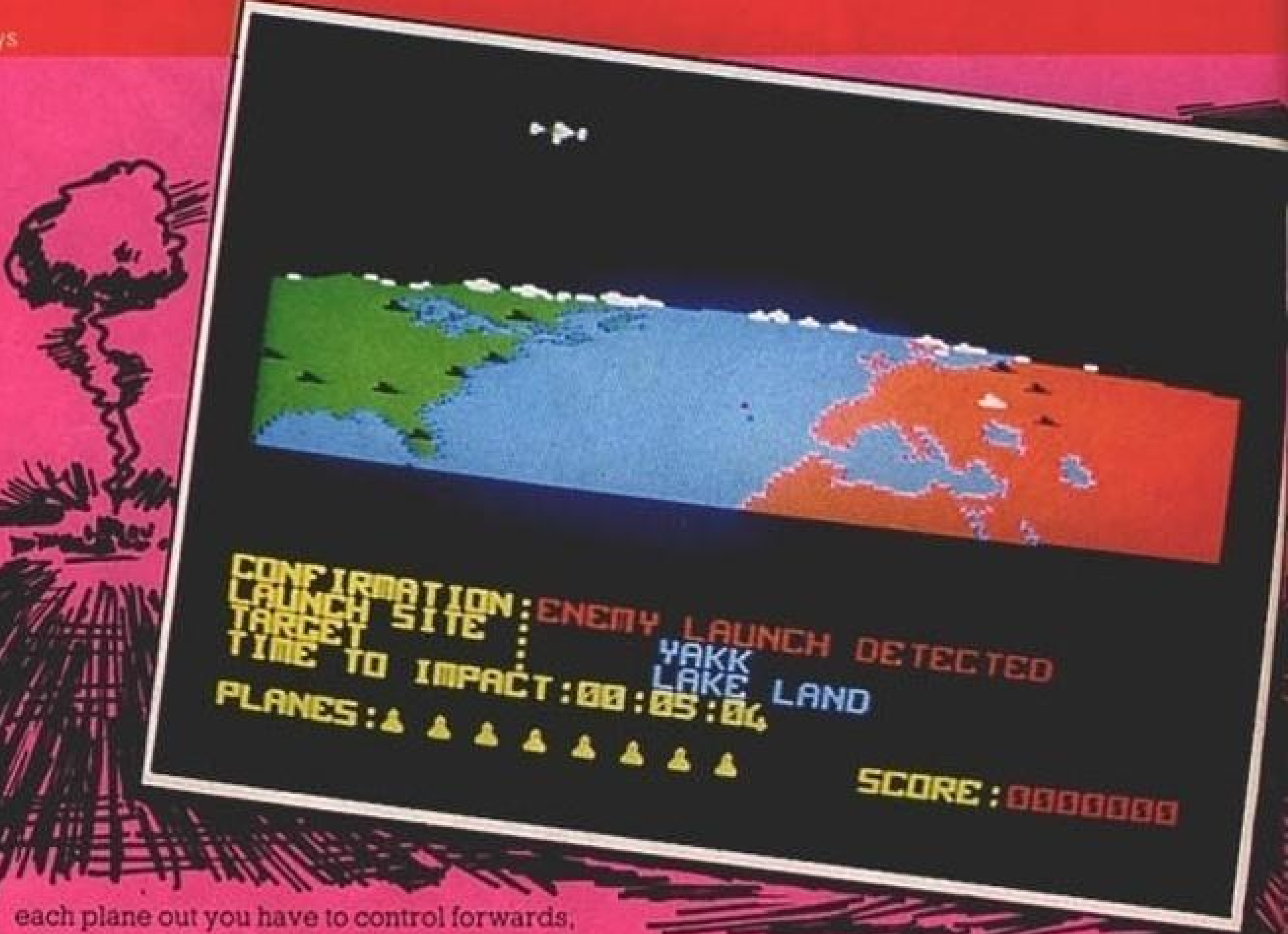
On previous micros this was a controversial game because of the politics involved (see panel) but with its conversion to the Amstrad the scenario has been changed. No longer are you blowing up well-meaning Soviet citizens but instead you're tup evil, nasty and totally fictitious Shandorians.

The Shandorians have launched a devastating missile attack on several of your cities. This is shown on a map of the northern hemisphere with the launch sites, targets, missiles and a satellite shown. The satellite is the base from which you must thwart the attack. Inside it are nine fighter planes which must be used to destroy the enemy missile silos, and hence their missiles, as well as their defence centre.

SECOND OPINION

I was really a bit disappointed that the name and scenario had been changed. I quite liked zapping the reds. Of course, I'd have been just as happy zapping the Yankees. But Raid is an excellent shoot-'em-up that requires not just bloodthirstiness, but a certain amount of finesse. In fact, your biggest problem may be in getting your planes out of the hangar in the first place.

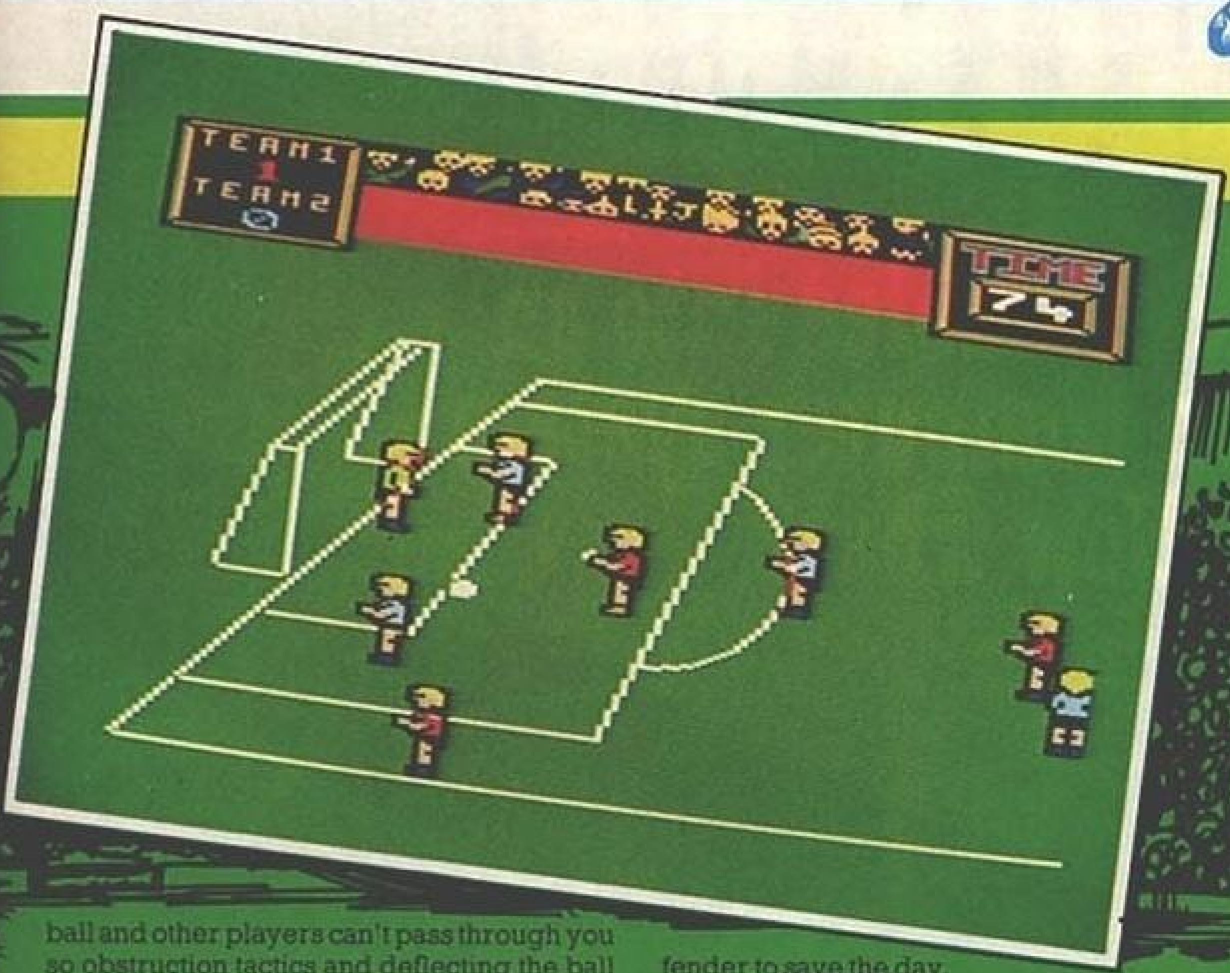
PC



CONFIRMATION: ENEMY LAUNCH DETECTED
LAUNCH SITE : YAKK
TARGET : LAKE LAND
TIME TO IMPACT: 00:05:06
PLANES:
SCORE: 0000000

The first task is to get the fighter planes out of the satellite hangar. This is easier said than done. The hangar appears as a single screen with a door near the top and the planes lined up on the right hand side. To get each plane out you have to control forwards, sideways and vertical thrust to aim it through the door. You also have to open the door, which has the nasty habit of closing automatically. Crashing into the walls, doors or ceiling is fatal and it may take many runs before you get the hang of getting the planes out regularly.

Once a plane is out you can switch to the map screen again and guide a dot (the plane) into a white launch site from where the missiles emanated. The display switches to a right-to-left scrolling display where you can bank the fighter left and right and increase or decrease height. As you move over the landscape you have to avoid everything remembering that unlike *Beach-Head* this has true 3D. Tanks, missiles and a helicopter are the main worry as they home in on you and shoot back. Static obstacles can sometimes be shot as can their more dangerous moving pals but even the ones that can't like trees and concrete blocks are fatal if flown into.



ball and other players can't pass through you so obstruction tactics and deflecting the ball can be quite handy.

Scoring is simply a matter of hitting the ball in the air or on the ground towards the goal, or even just running it in on the end of your boot. You can control your goalkeeper when the opposition are close to your goal to block shots. This is best done when it's in the air (the timing is still difficult) but if they shoot along the ground or run the ball in you're very much dependent on interposing a defender to save the day.

Players not under your control will tend to take up their normal positions but provide general support and move into positions where they can be passed to.

The graphics and animation are good, providing a more playable game than *World Cup* with many more features. The music at the beginning and end of each match is good and the multi-player option can provide some exciting and enjoyable competitions. The computer's pretty good too.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Good graphics and animation.**
- **Lots of good footballing elements in the gameplay.**
- **Fine start and finish music.**
- **Two types of competition.**
- **Exciting two player action.**
- **Many features allowing you to mould the game to your taste.**

BAD NEWS

- **Computer opponent may not be tough enough.**
- **Not always clear which player you will be controlling when not in possession.**

GRAPHICS	87%
SONICS	72%
GRAB FACTOR	90%
STAYING POWER	89%
A A RATING	89%

Don't Nuke the Reds

In its original form on other micros this game was called *Raid Over Moscow* and featured missile launches from 'Minsk to Miami', 'Leningrad to New York' and so on. This, combined with the tasteless task of blowing away Soviet guards outside the Kremlin (defence centre) and then destroying Moscow with a nuclear explosion, didn't go down too well with many people – including me.

The bit about shooting guards still isn't entirely wholesome, but then neither was *Space Invaders*. Without the warmongering it removes nasty overtones from the program and leaves us mindless, violent shoot-em-up fans to blast the living daylights out of something without getting a dodgy conscience.

It always was a storm in a teacup but it's nce to see the back of it –

If the fighter survives this run the screen changes to show the five silos at the launch site. The plane is at the bottom of the screen with the silos lined up at the top. Each silo has a slit in it which has to be shot through to destroy it. To do this you have to be at the right height and horizontal position. This is complicated by the silos and an enemy plane shooting back and the main silo having to be shot last. Success at this stage takes you back to the hangar with four extra planes (if you lost any) and another launch to contend with.

Each launch has to be dealt with in a limited time or one of your cities gets nuked and you lose a whole stack of points. When the last launch site is destroyed the fighter repeats the scrolling attack run to get to the defence center. Here he takes control of a single man at the bottom of the screen firing a bazooka.

On the rest of the screen are a building housing a nuclear reactor and guards on the walls who shoot at you. All of the guards and the doors on the building have to be shot in order to reveal the reactor and let you enter it. The problem is that the guards and a tank can shoot you and keep reappearing a while after being shot.

Once inside the reactor your man controls a number of discs which are used to destroy a pulsing robot. To do this the discs have to be bounced off the back wall to hit the robot in its vulnerable back. This isn't easy since he keeps moving around, shoots back and doesn't take kindly to being struck on the front. This has to be done eight times, the last four times within a two minute time limit. The reactor will blow up after only four hits but for you to get out the other four are needed.

The final sequence is of the centre blowing up with you flying away if you got out. With all the sequences the game demands a lot of different gameplay elements and has some very slick graphics on all of them. It isn't easy to complete, or even get started at, but with practice becomes very rewarding. One of the best shoot-em-ups yet.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Six testing and different stages.**
- **Slick graphics, colour and animation.**
- **Shoot-em-up elements requiring skill, timing and reflexes.**
- **Just a good blast now and not a political liability.**
- **Terrific gameplay for all stages combining to make a great whole.**

BAD NEWS

- **Getting out of the hangar can be a real problem.**

GRAPHICS	91%
SONICS	36%
GRAB FACTOR	90%
STAYING POWER	88%
A A RATING	89%

HACKER

You've stumbled into an unknown computer system. Now what?

"Logon".
One word appears on your screen.
What do you do now?
You don't know the password. You don't even know what computer system you've hacked into. But you do know that you must find out more.
There are no instructions. No rules. No clues.
You're completely on your own.
You've found your way in. But is there a way out?

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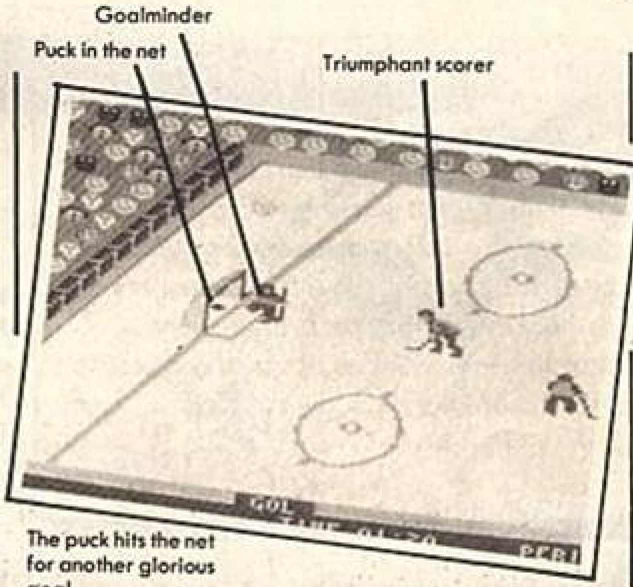
From selected branches of Boots, WH Smith, John Menzies, Lasky's, Spectrum, Greens, Woolworth, Littlewoods and good computer software stores everywhere

SLAPSHOT

Anirog, £7.95 cass, joystick, joystick with keys or keys



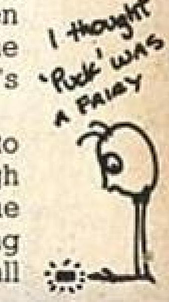
The puck hits the net for another glorious goal

The rough and tumble of ice hockey is the name of the game and sometimes it seems less gentlemanly than those boxing simulations. The game is played on a left-right scrolling screen with two teams of four players.

You can play against the computer or a human opponent or even watch the sides battle it out in demo mode. The aim is quite simply to score goals by getting the puck into the opposition's goal-net. These are situated at either end of the rink and are protected by a goalminder. In between are the various rink markings including lines across the playing surface and face-off circles.

Games consist of three periods, each lasting four minutes, in which there's plenty of time for scoring. You control which ever of your side's players is the nearest the puck and have to get possession. If it's loose then it's easy to pick up, just run into it with the stick. If the opposition have control then it's altogether harder.

The puck can be stolen by running into the player, passing disconcertingly through him as you go, and hoping you pick up the ball. Alternatively come through swinging the stick and hope to either knock the ball


I thought 'Puck' was a fairy

HACKER

Activision, £9.99 cass, joystick with keys

It's not often that a magazine advises you NOT to read one of its reviews but this is one such case. The reason is that by revealing anything about this game we are bound to spoil your enjoyment of it. The game's atmosphere and problems rely on your powers of deduction, guesswork and luck to find out what to do after accidentally hacking into someone's computer system. You have been warned – avoid the next few paragraphs if you want to enjoy *Hacker* to the full.

Having accidentally hacked into the computer you've now got to get past the initial security system. You shouldn't have too much trouble doing this with some perseverance and in later games you may even be able to find the password that gets you straight in.

You've now got to find out what on earth you're inside. The first job is to identify pieces off machinery on some equipment you've been given and this is a matter of experimentation before you can get it right. Having done that more information is given as to the situation that exists and the role you play in it. It's a matter of global crisis and you play the good guy role of trying to stop a group of evil minded people taking over the world. If that sounds a little far fetched for a hacker you're right.

SECOND OPINION

I used to think hacking was something smokers did in the morning – until I tried this. The start of the game is truly baffling, and it's only a stroke of luck that got me going at all. Thereafter, things were a little easier to work out. But not much. This is an involving blend of adventure and strategy, and even throws in a touch of humour for good measure.

PC

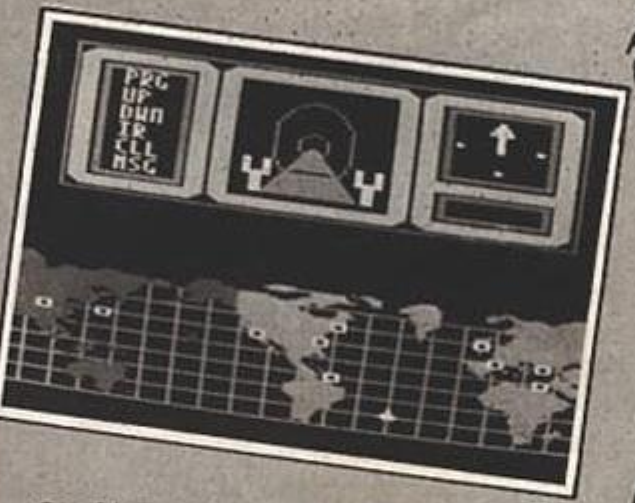
You have to reveal the existence of this plot to the US government while avoiding being booted out of the system. The hacker element of the game becomes rather lost while you're doing this and it becomes more of an adventure/strategy game than of code breaking and information sifting.

You control a vehicle that can travel through a worldwide network of tunnels in search of the necessary pieces of information to blow the whole kaboodle wide open. This involves negotiating and bartering with spies without falling prey to the security systems that may be activated.

This is all monitored on the screen via a map of the world and a readout at the top of the screen including a video image from the vehicle you control. The various joystick and keyboard controls also have to be worked out but this shouldn't take long once you realise you're in a tunnel network and the blobs on the map are cities.

If you've read this far you'll have a head start on most people but we bet you don't have as much fun as them. The game was a bit disappointing because it didn't turn out to be as hacker orientated as I was expecting but it still provides some great discovery fun and problem solving. Could cause lots of frustration – but then that's half the fun.

BW



One of the screens from the game – but labelling it would be giving the game away.

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Fascinating as you discover new information.**
- ▶ **Certainly a tough one to solve.**
- ▶ **Good atmosphere produced by the element of discovery.**
- ▶ **Interesting, if far fetched, storyline and task.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **If you get really stuck it could be terminally frustrating.**
- ▶ **Not that closely linked to real hacking.**
- ▶ **Reading this review if you wanted to get the most from the game.**

GRAPHICS	41%
SONICS	28%
GRAB FACTOR	85%
STAYING POWER	75%
A A RATING	77%

away or bring the man crashing to the ground. This is a penalty but from the face-off that follows you may be able to win the ball.

When in possession a player travels slower than usual and an opponent may skate up and take the ball off him. This means either passing between players or bouncing the ball off the rink boards. Once you get within sight of the goal you can line up the shot and let fly. The goal minder moves fairly randomly but if he manages to intercept a shot it will bounce off, perhaps into your path so you can have another try.

The scrolling is good with nice skaters, except when they pass through each other. The crowd is an ugly bunch but obligingly cheer goals. Things are really tough against the computer, being very difficult to dispossess and taking the ball off you all to frequently. Two player games are much more exciting with all the thrills and challenge that go with it.

BW

SECOND OPINION

I laughed like a drain when I first saw this – two teams of charladies with vacuum cleaners in a carpet cleaning competition. But once I was convinced it was meant to be ice-hockey I warmed to it. Especially satisfying is the vicious physical contact. The graphics are not terrific – but it's good, nasty fun.

PC

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Exciting two player action.**
- ▶ **A tough computer opponent.**
- ▶ **Good scrolling and player graphics.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Not much variety in gameplay.**
- ▶ **Off-putting when players pass through each other.**
- ▶ **Often difficult to tell when you can or can't get possession.**

GRAPHICS	68%
SONICS	27%
GRAB FACTOR	68%
STAYING POWER	65%
A A RATING	67%

ON THE RUN

Design Design, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

Design Design have established themselves as an excellent software house for the Amstrad with two hit titles already and this one looking like being another success. It's a very colourful with lots of screens, plenty of shooting and loads of objects to collect.

You control a protective-suited character called Rick Swift whose task is to collect six chemical flasks from a bewildering series of mazes. These are randomly located at the start of play but you can bet they'll be spread all over the place. The maze is made up of lots of mushrooms and other exotic, colourful and generally chemically mutated plants. Amongst these fly the equally mutated bits of animal and plant life which are definitely hazardous to your health.

A jet-pack is the means of propulsion around the mazes allowing up and down movement and 'walking' (no animation). As you travel the maze does a cross between scrolling and flick screens, flicking along part of a screen at a time.

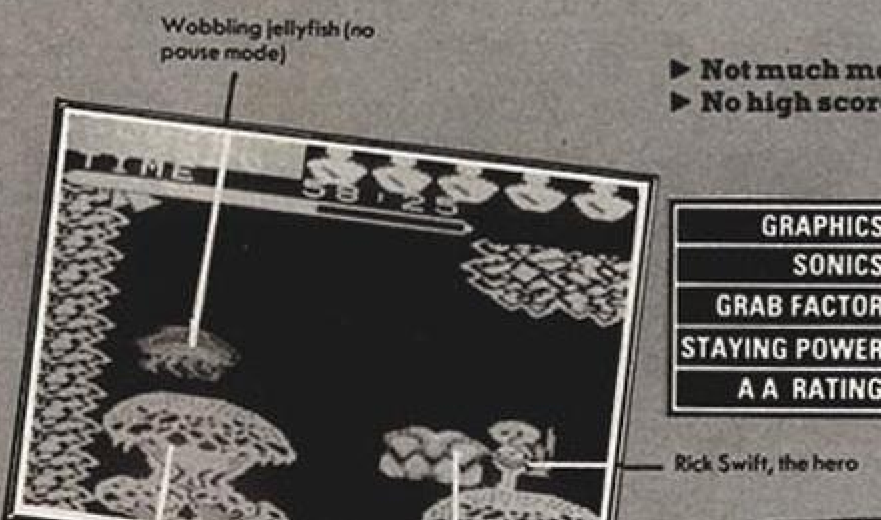
The suit you're wearing can only take so many collisions with the chemically lethal mutants, as they drain the suit energy. Creatures can be blasted using your gun that fires fluffy, but lethal, balls. This only fires horizontally though and it is possible to get trapped for precious seconds below or above a vicious mutant. These take some very colourful and well animated forms like snapping jaws, bug-eyed insects and altogether less identifiable beasts. You can also deal with these using smart bombs that are found lying about and which kill everything on screen.

There are plenty of objects lying around for you to pick up by walking over them and these have three types of purpose. Some give energy, others drain it and there are also 'keys' to access new areas of the maze. The flasks are picked up in the same way and look like little coloured fairy cakes. You have to discover what everything is by trial and error but some objects do nothing leaving a little puzzling after the first few games.

New areas of the maze are denoted by 'frog' gates with two green frogs on either side. You can only pass through these with a key but it leads to more of the same.

The graphics are amongst the most stunning I've seen but the gameplay leaves something to be desired. Once you've worked out what the objects do (not that hard) it becomes just a matter of whizzing round blasting everything in sight looking for flasks, energy and keys. There is still a strong attraction and a tough challenge but the game lacks that vital extra mental aspect that arcade adventures need.

BW



Mushrooms

Snapping jaws

SECOND OPINION

Yes indeed – stunning graphics. Colourful, beautifully drawn, give me a poster fror the parlour wall. But the game is a little too familiar in concept to present an outstanding challenge. It's still very good, but doesn't quite make it to the top.

PC

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Large playing area.**
- ▶ **Marvellous scenery and characters.**
- ▶ **Testing shoot-em-up action.**
- ▶ **Will take quite a lot of getting through.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Not much mental challenge.**
- ▶ **No high score table! Unbelieveable!**

GRAPHICS	95%
SONICS	31%
GRAB FACTOR	79%
STAYING POWER	78%
A A RATING	79%

"I've a 'fungy' feeling there isn't

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ELIDON

Orpheus, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

This is certainly a candidate for 'nicest and cutest' game of the year, featuring as it does an olde worlde faerie in her search for seven potions to make flowers bloom. 'Ahhhhhh' I hear you say, 'isn't that nice'. That silliness over, let's face the fact that it's a fairly unoriginal arcade adventure as far as gameplay is concerned.

The faerie you control is a slender thing with two frail wings that flutter about. She can fly around or hover and moves between screens using gaps in the walls. The screens are flick rather than scrolling. She can fly, walk or even hover through the screens in her quest. She starts by the garland which is to contain the seven flowers of Finvarra. Many of the screens are filled with colourful plants and flowers but they also contain some nasty enemies.

Seven potions are hidden amongst the screens and to make the flowers bloom these must be found and taken to the flowers. You'll have to work out what is and isn't a potion since there are other objects lying around that have different effects. Some things are even hidden behind doors, the secrets to which you have to work out. This isn't easy since you're given very few hints.

The faerie is powered by magic dust and many things sap this strength if they touch her – floating lumps of tree spirit or falling particles and even the odd pair of staring eyes. The energy can be replaced by getting patches of faerie dust or lucky charms (horseshoes) but the latter can occasionally be bad luck and therefore reduce the dust level.

Some rooms are curiously coloured in black and white with only the faerie in colour (either to show winter's cold effect on the land or because they ran out of memory) with others being pitch dark so that it's difficult to navigate about. This is particularly dangerous because every time the faerie flies into something she plummets helplessly out of control until she lands on something solid. This unfortunate effect can send you falling several screens if you're hit when positioned over a downward gap.

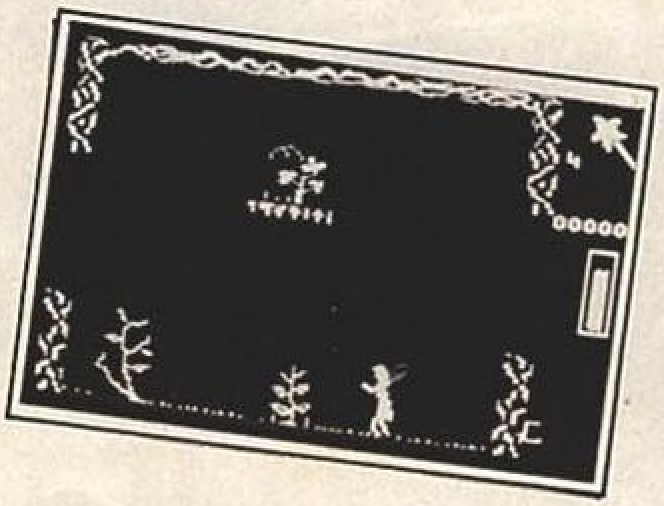
The faerie idea brings a refreshing novel touch to the game and Grieg's music which plays throughout is excellent. However the graphics aren't particularly astounding with a flickery faerie (yes I know the wings are supposed to do that but the rest of her isn't), the black and white, and all black screens. The gameplay also tends to be more of exploration and stamina rather than a true arcade adventure, but it is still a fairy challenge that will take some mastering.

BW

SECOND OPINION

Very pretty but just a little on the twee side for my taste. Flutter flutter's all very well, but it gets a trifle wearisome after a while. I didn't, I admit, have much success in finding the necessary objects. But then I wasn't really involved enough to care.

PC



The faerie rests her wings in one of the picturesque locations

GOOD NEWS

- ► **Large playing area to explore and map.**
- ► **You've got to work out what many objects do.**
- ► **It certainly isn't easy to complete.**
- ► **Excellent music.**

BAD NEWS

- ► **Slightly disappointing graphics that promised more.**
- ► **Flying about can get boring when you're not always sure what you're doing.**
- ► **Continually dropping out of the sky can get frustrating.**
- ► **The death routine when you run out of dust is a little tacky as a it leaves a cross with RIP on it.**

GRAPHICS	68%
SONICS	88%
GRAB FACTOR	65%
STAYING POWER	70%
A A RATING	68%

STARION

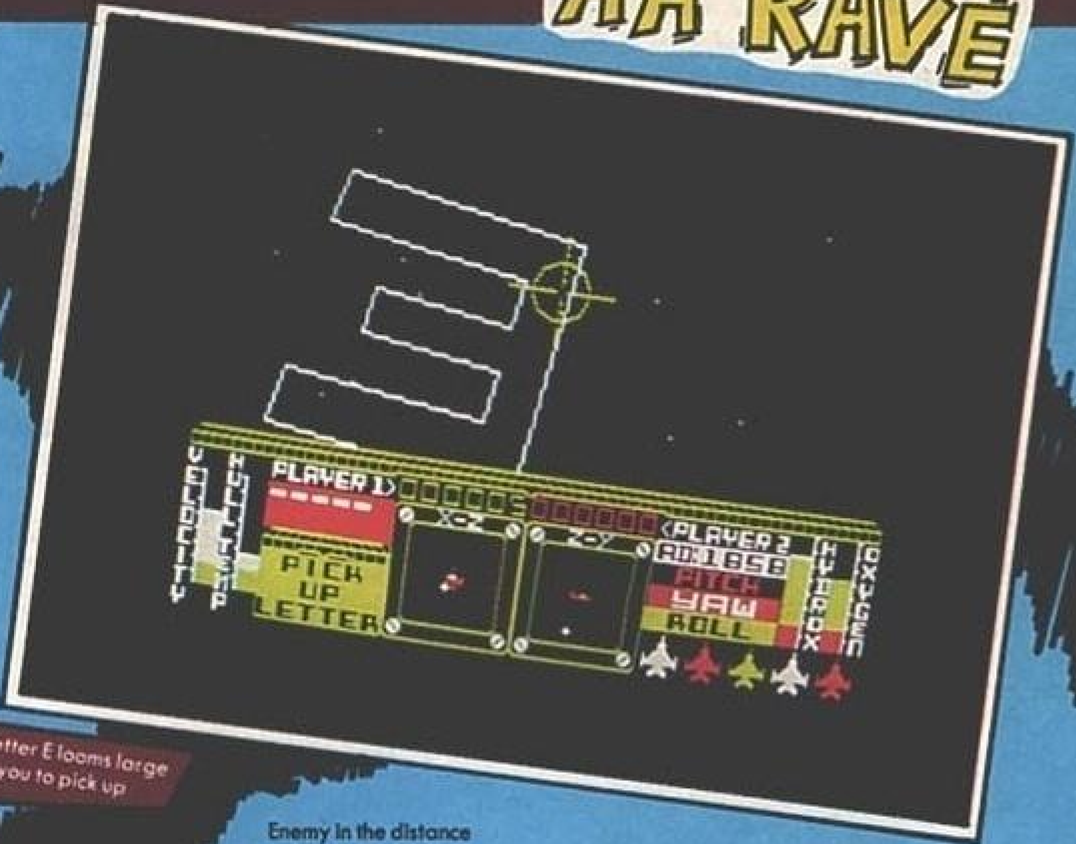
Melbourne House, £9.95 cass, joystick or keys

Setting new standards in vector graphics that better even *Tankbusters* and leave you starry-eyed, this deep-space blast moves at tremendous speed and gives you a real mental challenge.

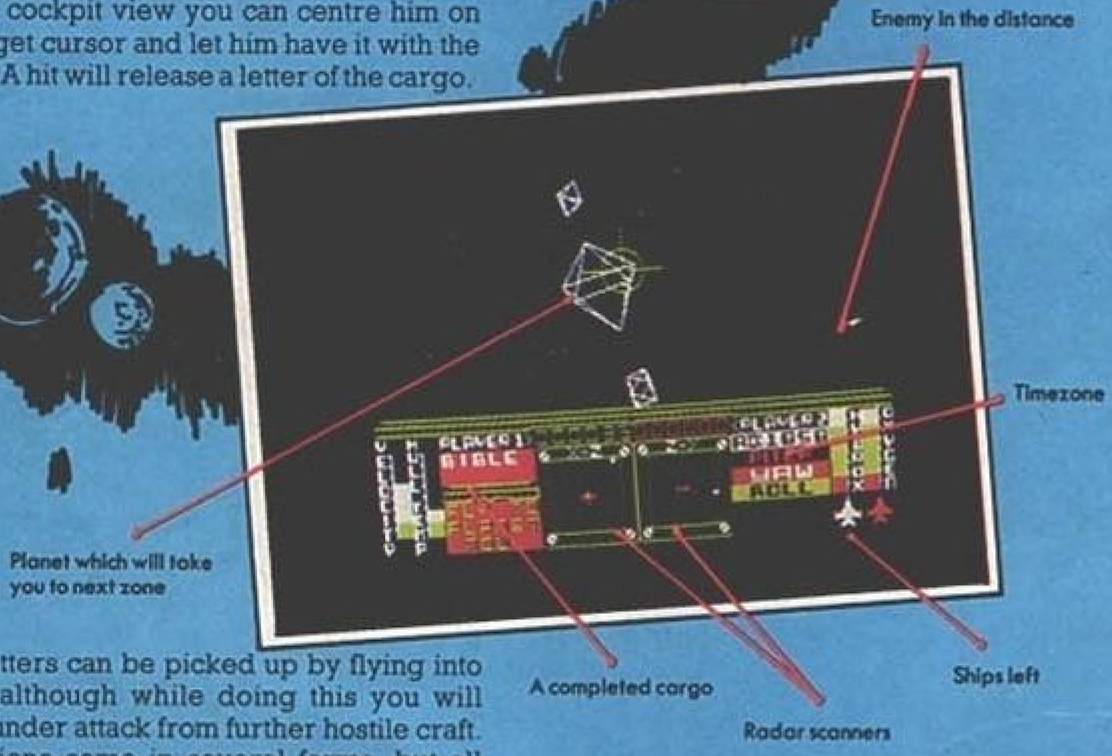
The action takes place in three time blocks, each split into nine time grids, which are further subdivided into nine time zones. This calculates out at 243 time zones in which you have to recover a cargo and return it to its rightful place.

The cargoes are composed of letters stored on alien ships. The aliens had stolen the cargoes from many times in history and to restore order you have to return the objects to their right times.

Once in a time zone the aliens will appear individually to battle with you. They can be tracked on scanners on the instrument panel. These are in two planes, vertical and horizontal, which are easy to use after practice and are much more effective than the kind of scanners normally found in games of this type. Once the alien is in the upper screen cockpit view you can centre him on the target cursor and let him have it with the lasers. A hit will release a letter of the cargo.



A letter E looms large for you to pick up



Letters can be picked up by flying into them, although while doing this you will come under attack from further hostile craft. The aliens come in several forms, but all shoot back and with the speed of the action can be hard to hit and easy to be hit by. Once all the letters in a zone have been picked up the computer automatically goes to a screen where you have to organise the letters into a word – the cargo.

SECOND OPINION

The graphics really are stunning – it's just about the best version of space I've seen on any computer, let alone the Amstrad – and the idea of battling through to become the Creator certainly appealed to the megalomaniac in me. Excellent shoot-'em-up action too. The only drawback is the possible similarity of the zones. But then I've seen too few to tell.

PC

In block one, grid one, zone one, the cargo is BIBLE. Armed with this information you have to go to one of the other eight zones in the grid. Here are found planets and flying into them lets you know if you've got the right cargo for that zone. If correct the oxygen and fuel are replenished and it's off to solve another problem. If wrong though you should note the historical problem for later use (another cargo will solve it), fight your way out of the zone and try another zone.

After completing nine time zones (one grid) a password has to be formed from the nine first letters of the cargoes to allow you to travel to another grid. The action is repeated after nine grids (one block) using the first letters of each grid password. If all three blocks are completed you'll have three block passwords, the first and last letters of which will form a six letter master password allowing you to become the CREATOR. Gosh!

It sounds complicated but once started everything falls into place fairly easily. The hardest part of the game is the actual fighting. The ship is equipped with five hulls which can be heated up or destroyed completely by collisions with mines, rocks and missiles. In addition to these indicators there are also speed, letters collected, pitch, yaw, roll, oxygen and fuel indicators.

The zones can become somewhat repetitive but the challenge is still strong. The fact that the password routes stay the same means that you can gradually adventure your way through them learning which passwords go where. Outstanding graphics and gameplay make this another winner for the down-under software house.

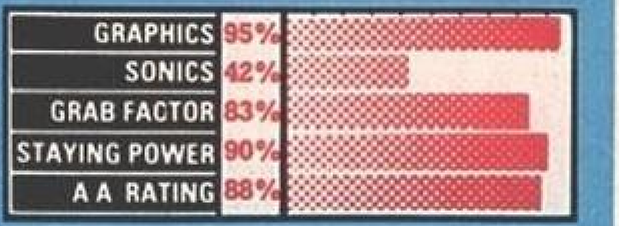
BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Marvellous 3D vector graphics.**
- **243 zones and 255 passwords.**
- **Strong, lasting challenge.**
- **Shoot-em-up gameplay is addictive.**
- **Well-implemented abstract game idea.**

BAD NEWS

- **Zones become repetitive.**
- **Controls may be too fast.**



KNOW THE ZONES

The make up of the 243 zones is complicated, so here's another run down for easy understanding.

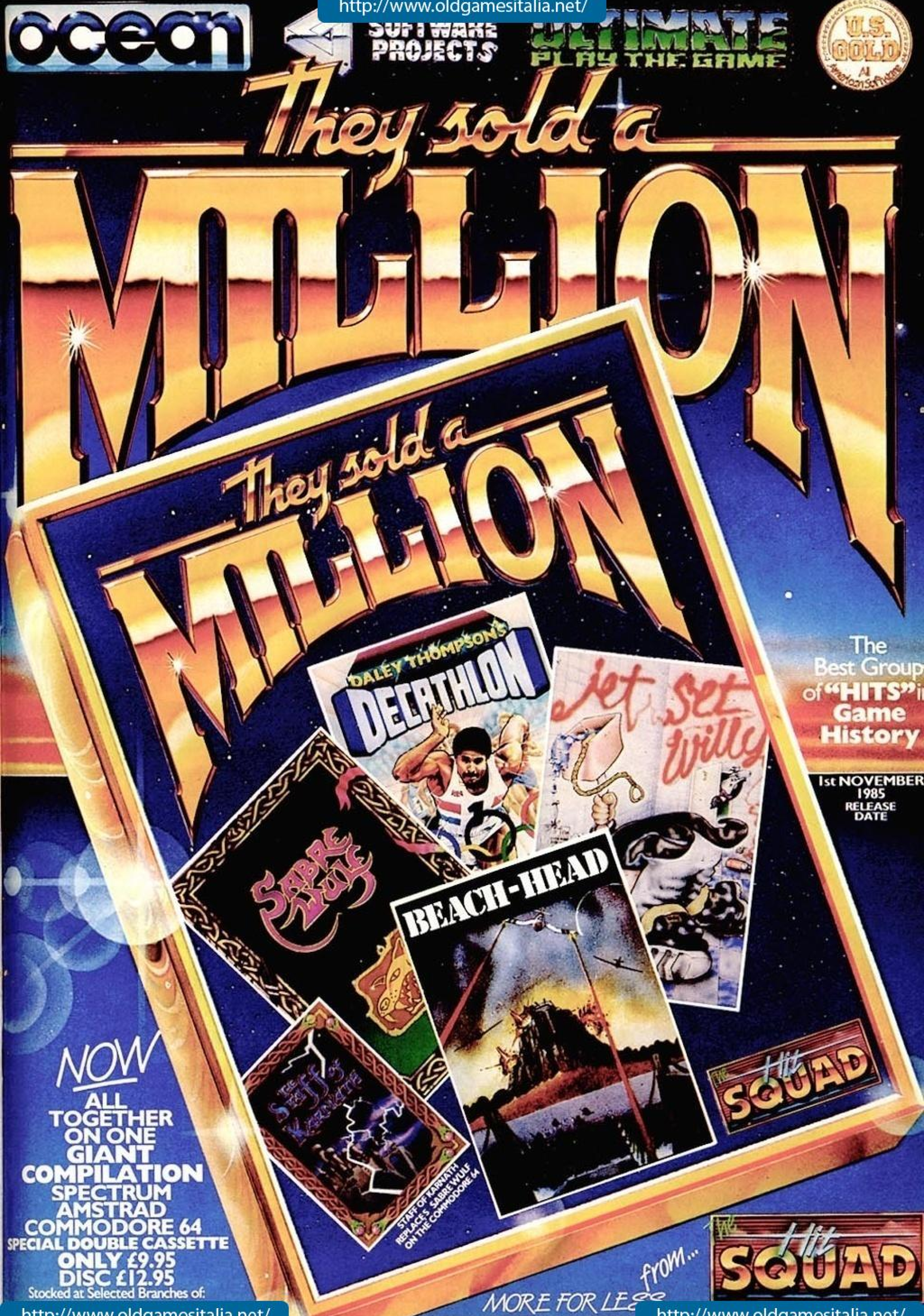
BLOCKS: there are three blocks each accessed by a nine letter password and containing nine time grids.

GRIDS: there are 27 grids in all, nine in each block. Each is accessed by a nine letter password and contains nine time zones.

ZONES: there are 243 zones, nine in each grid. Each one contains a cargo

that solves a

zc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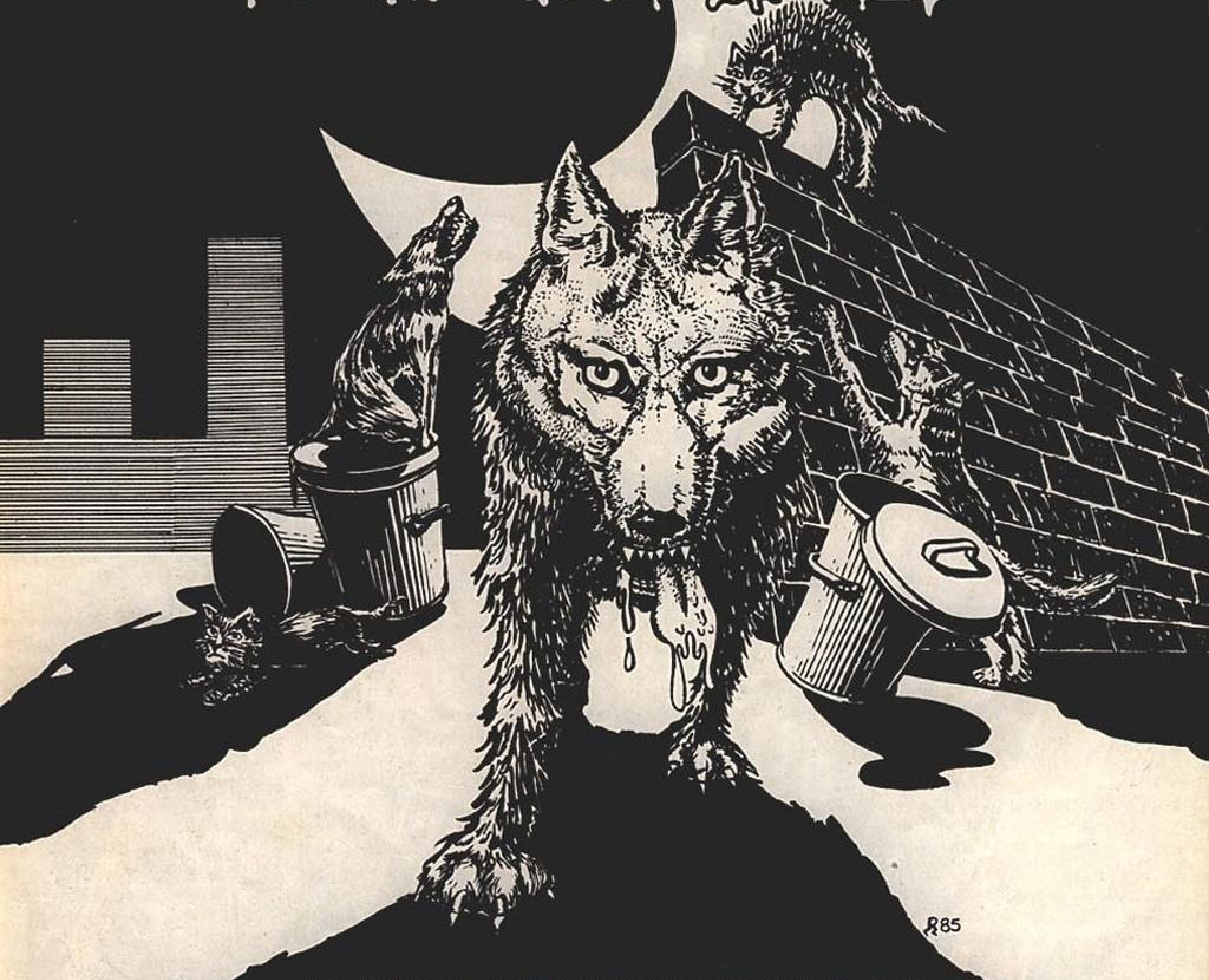

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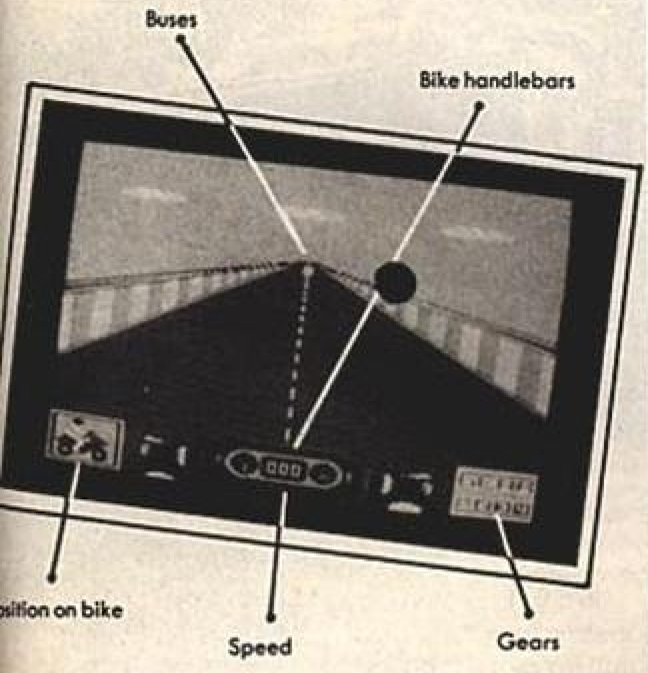
3D STUNTRIDER

Amsoft, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Bike jumping has been a popular thing to simulate in the past and this latest offering, reportedly designed by Alan Sugar, gives two different views of the jump. It starts with a 3D approach to the ramp and then switches to a side view as the bike flies across a row of buses.

You begin with five lives and can attempt 5, 10, 15, 20 or 25 buses depending on which level is selected. Once underway a forward view from the bike is presented with the handlebars and the road ahead visible. Off in the distance is the ramp with the buses behind it.



The instruments at the bottom of the screen consist of a small bike replica to indicate your sitting angle on it, your hands on the handlebars, a rev counter, speedometer, clock and gear indicator. To lower wind resistance you should lean forward on the approach, increasing speed. As you accelerate your hand twists the throttle on the handlebars and the bike automatically goes through the gears. All this has to be completed within the time limit – but this is very generous.

Along the run-up crosswinds are encountered, particularly on higher levels, and you have to steer against them so that the bike hits the ramp straight, otherwise you slam into the side of the buses. Once on the ramp the screen switches to a side view of the ramp and the buses. Here you have to time leaning back on the bike to get maximum impetus off the ramp.

Once in the air you have to change position on the bike so as not to tumble out of control and crash. If the bike clears the buses you have to land on the other side either flat or slightly on the back wheel but never on the front. If you can land on the down ramp you get a 1000 point bonus, otherwise the score is 100 for each bus cleared.

The scrolling as you fly across the buses is very smooth although there's only the bike and buses on screen. Crashing leaves a crumpled, smouldering heap of wreckage. It's definitely possible to clear 40 buses on level eight but getting over 45 would be a superhuman effort.

BW

SECOND OPINION

The graphics were quite nice, and I liked seeing the hand twist round to change gears. But that was really the visual high point – the buses and the background were both pretty dull. The sound started with a bright intro tune which soon became boring game noises. The real trouble with the game, though, is that there isn't enough to do.

PC

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Skill is needed when 'flying' the bike.**
- ▶ **The combination of 3D and side view is quite novel.**
- ▶ **The scrolling is very smooth.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **It's not a true 3D game.**
- ▶ **Jumping buses gets uninteresting.**
- ▶ **Not much to do except accelerate and move backward and forward on the bike.**
- ▶ **Trying to hit the down ramp is the only lasting test.**

GRAPHICS	74%
SONICS	57%
GRAB FACTOR	61%
STAYING POWER	51%
A A RATING	57%

SUBTERRANEAN STRYKER

Amsoft Insight, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Here's yet another cavern caper that combines the talents of many games to make a novel new challenge. The aim is to fly a 'stryker' plane through the twists, turns and obstacles of an underground complex, trying to rescue humans.

The display shows the planet surface with the stryker above it. At the top a *Defender*-style scanner shows you where hostile moving aliens and the humans are. The craft can move in all directions across the scrolling landscape as long as it avoids crashing into aliens and objects.

The aliens cruise the planet surface and caverns spouting bombs like landers in *Defender*. They can be shot using a forward firing laser but any contact with them or there bombs means the loss of a ship. There are also other instantly deadly objects like burrowing worms, dripping liquid, spiders, bubbles and bullet-like doors. These all tend to block narrow passages and have to be snuck past as they move up and down.

Non-moving scenery is not so fatal and your shields can survive many brushes with it as you race around the caverns. However a head-on collision burying the ship in a wall will still end in disaster. Most of these passages and even the moving objects can be avoided but with the random aliens thrown in it gives more problems.

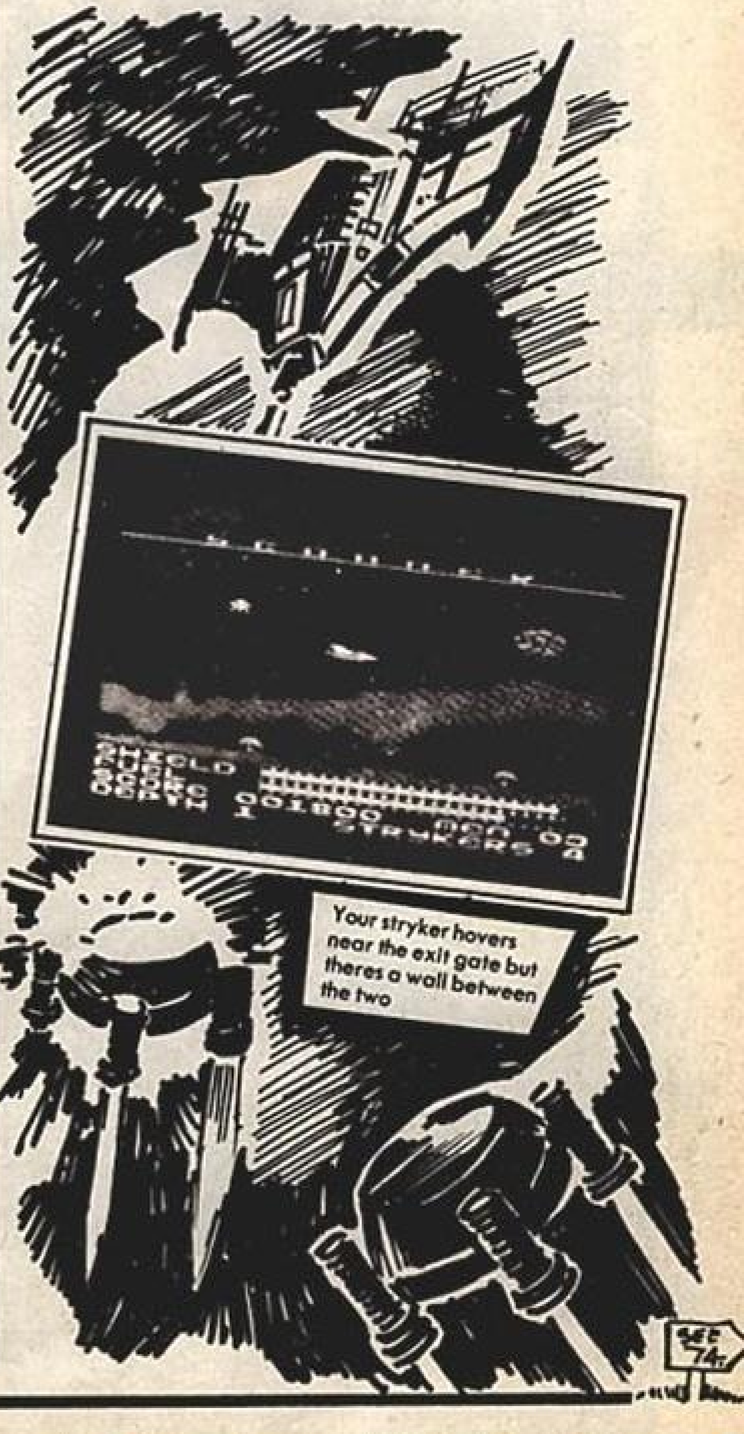
There are eight humans that have to be rescued on each level of cave and they are always shown hacking away at the ground with a pick axe. Slave labour presumably. You pick them up by just touching them with the ship. When all eight are aboard an energy gate will disappear from a section of cave allowing the ship to pass to the next section.

At the beginning of each section you are given a new shield and fuel but in the underground areas there are nozzles where you can pick up more fuel and energy for the shields. If you hang around for too long on a level the alien command saucer whizzes out and attempts to ram the stryker. When a life is lost the ship reappears at the entry gate to that level.

SECOND OPINION

Well, it's a nice try at something new by mixing a lot of familiar elements. If it's not quite successful it's because it's neither one thing nor another. Or even anything else. Some pretty trees don't really make up for the nasty firing and jerky scrolling.

PC



Your stryker hovers near the exit gate but theres a wall between the two

The scrolling around the caves is very jerky but the caves themselves are well-designed and full of interesting features. There's not much sound except for bangs, crashes and the hum of your ship when it moves. The gameplay calls for a mixture of dexterity, fast movement and good reactions.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Lots of difficult sections to crack.**
- **Well-designed caves.**
- **Novel, well-drawn obstacles and men.**
- **Gradual damage feature makes a pleasant change to instant crashing as does the lack of inertia on the ship.**

BAD NEWS

- **Scrolling is very jerky.**
- **One wrong move under an obstacle and you're dead.**
- **Aliens can be annoyingly random sometimes making an area impossible to pass.**

GRAPHICS	68%
SONICS	32%
GRAB FACTOR	71%
STAYING POWER	70%
AA RATING	69%

ROCCO

Gremlin Graphics, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Physical violence seems to have been this year's theme for computer games and this is the latest for the Amstrad. It's another boxing simulation in which you have to fight your way past four opponents to gain the world championship title.

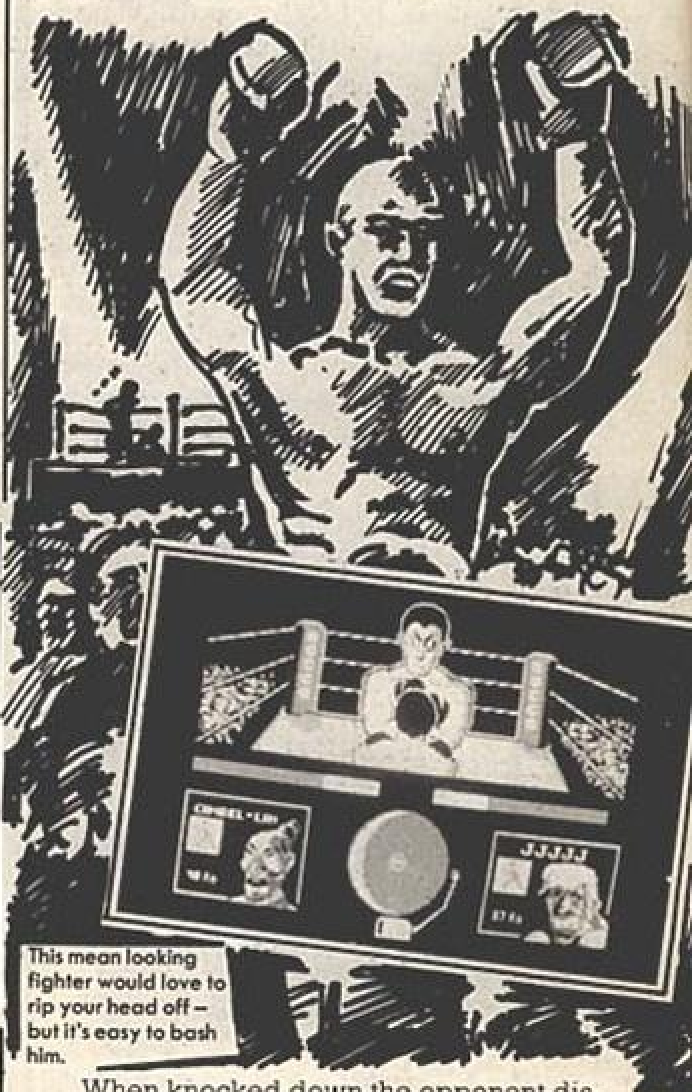
The screen gives you a view of the ring from behind the head of your boxer. Facing the screen is a mean looking dude who looks set to spread you all over the canvas. There are four fighters to compete against – Cimbel-Lin, Ted Matare, Jansen Sino and Fighter Bull. Whichever one happens to be in the ring the fighter always looks the same and performs the same graphic actions.

SECOND OPINION

The graphics were superb – to begin with. But the limited options meant that the game rapidly becomes very dull. And what is the point of having four 'different' fighters if they all look exactly the same and use exactly the same moves? This game could have been, and should have been, much better.

PC

The aim is to knock the opposing fighter down three times by reducing his strength gauge to zero. You also have a gauge and this is reduced every time the opponent lands a punch. There are only four basic actions – left and right punches and left and right defense. This means the action is very repetitive and once you've discovered the pattern of how to knock down the boxers it's easy.



This mean looking fighter would love to rip your head off – but it's easy to bash him.

When knocked down the opponent disappears from view and then rises back up again for more punishment. The graphics for the punching are good but again too limited in scope. On the third count the bell rings and

FORMULA ONE

CRL £7.95 cass joystick with keys or keys

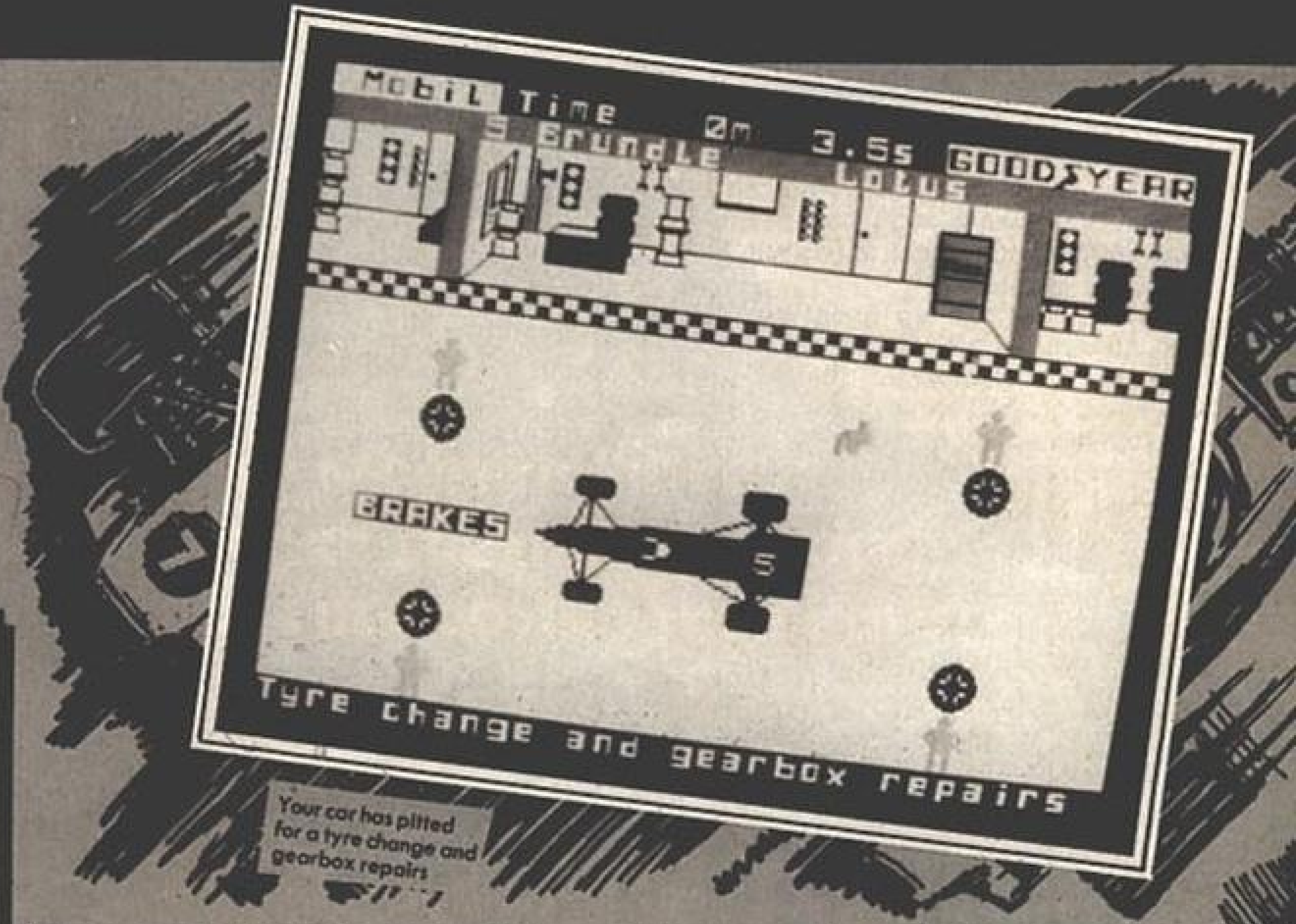
If you're expecting a *Pole Position*-type game you'll be disappointed but what you do get is an engaging strategy game putting you at the head of a racing driving team for a full Formula One Grand Prix season.

The game simulates the 16 race season with your team taking part and trying to lift the drivers and constructors world championships. Your first task is to pick the number of players from one to six, the computer controls those you don't operate. You can pick any of six teams and two sponsors to give you money. Drivers also have to be selected from the list of 24 including six novices who you can name yourself. But the more experienced drivers cost more to employ.

SECOND OPINION

I don't usually appreciate anything to do with motor racing, what with all that noise and Murray Walker droning on about carburettors and camshafts. But I really enjoyed this – there are huge amounts of money to squander and it's fun to see your driver changing positions throughout the races even if these are a little long-winded.

PC



Your car has pitted for a tyre change and gearbox repairs

The two cars in the team have to be fitted out with an engine, chassis and pit crew to make them race-worthy. These all cost money and for the first few races it may only be possible to outfit one car properly. Each car's efficiency is given in percentage form and takes into account the driver's ability. If a car doesn't make the grade it won't be allowed to race.

Now you get around to the race. The details of the racetrack, weather conditions, past winner and lap record are given. In light of the

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ACTION TEST

you progress to the next opponent.

In the first round of bouts you face each of the four opponents (no real difference), then the last three, then two, then just Fighter Bull. At the end you are proclaimed champion of the world and that's it.

Even if you don't work out the pattern of the boxers' actions you can beat them to the punch quite easily when they're unguarded, so you should have no trouble handing out some real hidings. All this makes the game very disappointing and your money would be better spent on *Frank Bruno's Boxing* for a tougher more varied game.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Initially some nice graphics.**

BAD NEWS

- **Gameplay is monotonous.**
- **Too few punch options to be interesting.**
- **Only one real opponent despite name changes.**
- **Not as good as *Frank Bruno's Boxing*.**
- **Far too easy to master.**

GRAPHICS	62%
SONICS	31%
GRAB FACTOR	45%
STAYING POWER	27%
A A RATING	36%

SUPER SAM

Budgie/Alligata, £2.99 cass, joystick or keys

Alligata are the latest software house to move into the budget software market with a new animal label called Budgie. The first release is a 60 room exploration game where you have to find the 18 pieces of a cage.

Each location is in 3D although the graphics are simple and lacking much fine detail. Sam can wander around screens where they like, but Sam has to watch out for the nasties, potholes and the various doorways and ladders that will lead him to new rooms.

SECOND OPINION

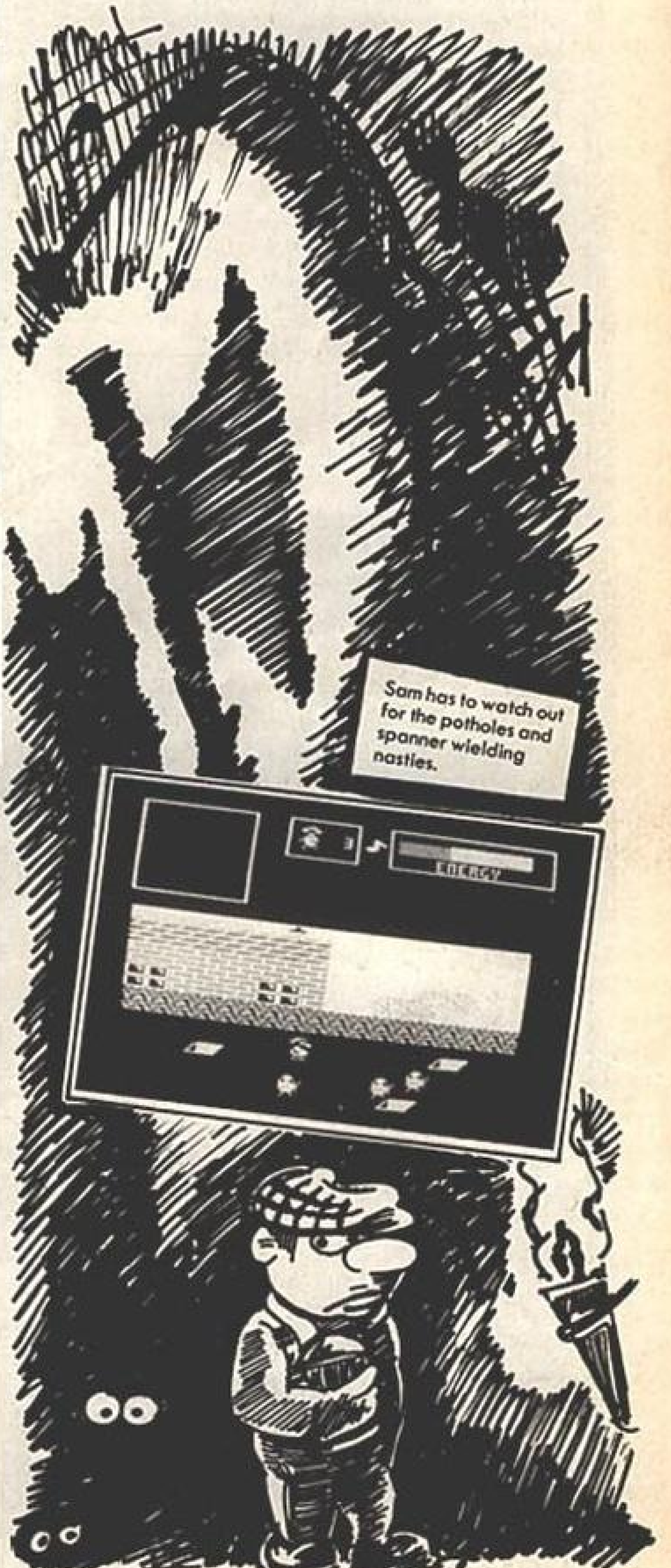
Not only is the identity of the evil Boris unknown, you aren't even told who Sam is and why he's involved in this game. He's fat, bearded and appears to be wearing a turban, evidence which leads me to think he may be an Oriental gentleman. Hence, perhaps, the mystery. The game itself is nothing to get excited about.

PC

The red pieces of cage are strewn all over the 60 rooms, hidden in corners or small locations. Sam picks them up by just walking over them and if he manages to get all 18 he can catch Boris. Who Boris is is anybody's guess.

Connections between rooms are made through doorways, ladders and what looks like a subway tunnel. Sam just has to walk into these and you flick to the next screen. The only openings to avoid are the potholes which are square holes in the floor. These will drop you into a watery grave, losing one of your three lives.

The creatures which are on many screens will sap your strength if they touch you and you have no means of destroying them. If energy reaches zero that also loses one of Sam's lives. The only way to defend yourself against creatures is to walk over a syringe which gives you a period of immunity. A clock counts quickly down from 1,000 and during this time you can touch any beasts at all without harm.



Sam has to watch out for the potholes and spanner wielding nasties.

The action is accompanied by some reasonable music as Sam trundles his way around but the graphics aren't likely to thrill. The game is really just a 'run around collecting objects' and isn't up to the standard of Mastertronic's latest cheapies. But it may still provide some interest.

BW

SEE 76

weather and temperature you have to select tyres for the race. There are five compounds of tyre soft, medium or hard slicks, intermediates or rain tyres. The cars' grid positions are now determined and the race begins.

The race can be viewed in full or just in highlights with events like spins, crashes, punctures and tyre changes being noted for all cars. The screen shows the start, the finishing straight with a crowd turning their heads and cars whizzing by or pulling into the pits. A score board shows the current race positions with the time gaps between the first six cars.

When a car comes into the pits an overhead view is shown with five pit crew, four holding tyres and one on his own. You control the fifth man and have to replace all four tyres and if necessary do work on the engine or chassis as well. The tyres can be of a different compound to those started on and you can specify this before changing. This is handy if weather conditions change and you have to call your cars into the pits.

At the end of the race points are awarded: nine for first then six, four, three, two, one. These are added to the overall totals. Prize money and sponsorship money are then awarded depending on your success. This cash can be put into improving the cars' performance and you can even have side bets on the winner of each race. The game then repeats itself for another 15 races.

The race graphics aren't brilliant but manage to convey some of the tension of real racing as the cars' positions shift about. The strategy element is quite compulsive trying to get the cars to peak performance and get the tyres and pit stops right. It's certainly one for the enthusiast – but has wider appeal as well.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **16 grand prixs make a nice long season.**
- **Excellent for more than one player as cars battle it out.**
- **A tough challenge on higher levels against the computer.**
- **Great fun if you like motor racing.**

BAD NEWS

- **Perhaps not enough to do for some.**
- **Graphics could be a mite better.**

GRAPHICS	47%
SONICS	52%
GRAB FACTOR	69%
STAYING POWER	75%
A A RATING	72%

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G O O D N E W S

- ▶ The price.
- ▶ 60 screens.
- ▶ The syringes were a cute idea (must contain penicillin).

B A D N E W S

- ▶ Gameplay is limited to just running about.
- ▶ Graphics aren't very detailed.
- ▶ Little original thought.
- ▶ Not always clear when you will or won't fall down a pothole.

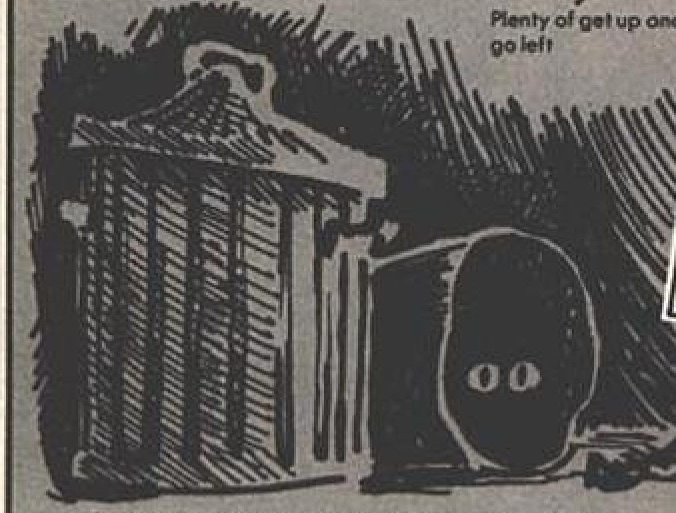
GRAPHICS	38%
SONICS	62%
GRAB FACTOR	52%
STAYING POWER	36%
A A RATING	47%

PAWS

Artic, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

Come with me now to a town where it isn't safe for a cat to walk the streets, where killer dachshunds pad the pavements and families of kittens are scattered to the four corners of a hostile environment. Really breaks your heart doesn't it? Well it shouldn't, because the cat involved looks like a polar bear and fires fluff-balls that would knock the spots off a dalmatian.

You take the role of Selwyn the cat who has to get together his family of ten kittens at their dustbin home. A pack of dogs, led by Bulldog Billy, are out to kill you and the kittens – obviously they don't like your dustbin decor. The town is a large rectangular map made up of streets running through woodland, brick walls, houses, shops and scrapyards. Scattered somewhere about are your home, the dogs den, ten kittens and stacks of cat goodies.

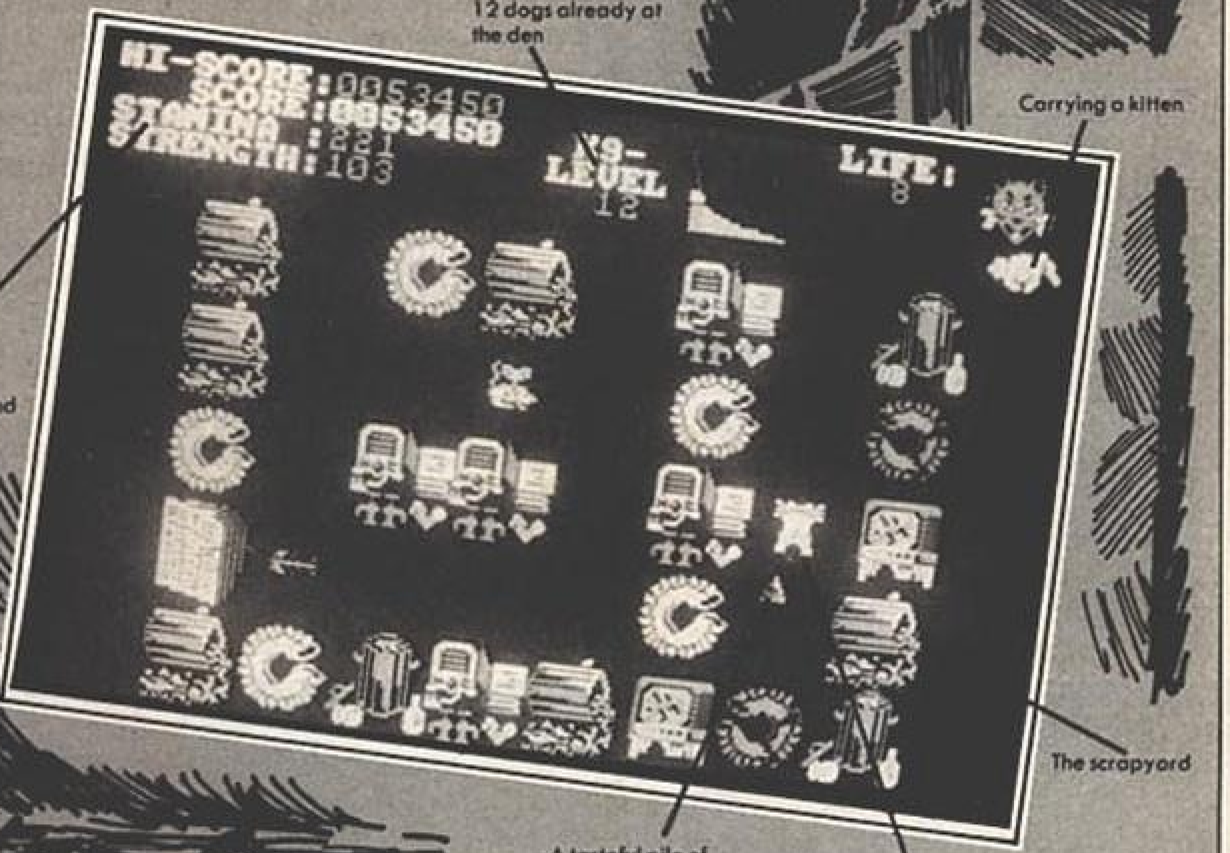


Selwyn appears at a random point in the town but can access a map on which appear all the relevant features except food. He has one of two aims, either to get all ten kittens home before 24 dogs congregate at the den or to kill so many dogs that there aren't 24 left to get to the den. The kittens have to be picked up one at a time and carried to the den, which makes for very long trips in the large town.

There are three basic types of dogs that wander about yellow, blue and green in order of increasing intelligence and strength. When these come together they combine to form another stronger dog. Once they have arrived at the den there is nothing you can do about it but while they roam the town there are several ways of putting paid to them.

Fluff balls are the most powerful and knock the stuffing out of any sausage dog. You can also take the dashing dachshunds on in paw to paw combat but this saps your strength and stamina gauges even more than fluff balls. Your other weapon is little piles of 'catoplexic' energy that stun dogs for a while and which can be left tastefully behind Selwyn (at least he doesn't squat).

Strength and stamina lost by fighting, fluff-balling and walking around can be replaced by picking up goodies like fishbones, canaries, milk, mice, goldfish bowls and fish that are lying about all over the place. If stamina reaches zero the cat loses one of its nine lives from complete exhaustion.



12 dogs already at the den

Carrying a kitten

Plenty of get up and go left

The scrapyard

A tasteful pile of catoplexic energy

Bruiser Selwyn

There are five levels of difficulty and as they increase the number and strength of the dogs does as well. The game isn't that difficult on the easy level but will still take some time to complete since this is a fat, muscular cat and not a fast one. All the scenery is very attractive although turning into roads can be difficult sometimes as you have to be correctly positioned.

BW

SECOND OPINION

Bits of this game looked very impressive, with their Ultimateish graphics. Other bits looked pretty dull. But it's quite large, so you'll always find something interesting. Dogs merging is a very humorous sight, but doeesn't so much for Selwyn's life span. The sound, though, is rather disappointing.

PC

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ Good graphics for town and characters.
- ▶ Interesting game scenario, if a little bloodthirsty.
- ▶ Compulsive, kitten caring gameplay.

B A D N E W S

- ▶ Fairly simple 'collect and drop' game at heart.
- ▶ Not too much skill involved.
- ▶ Control and action is rather slow.

GRAPHICS	77%
SONICS	38%
GRAB FACTOR	74%
STAYING POWER	68%
A A RATING	70%

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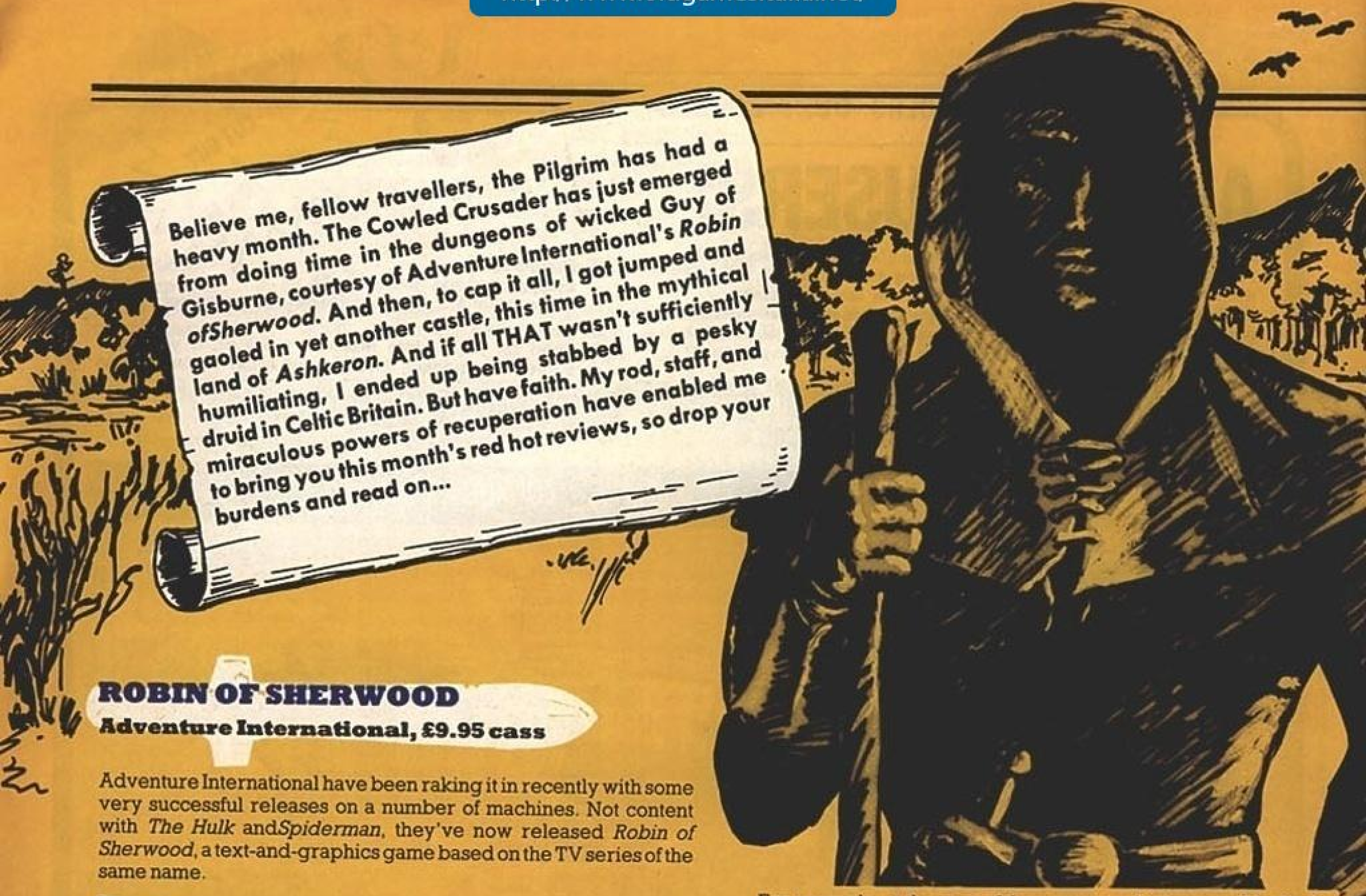
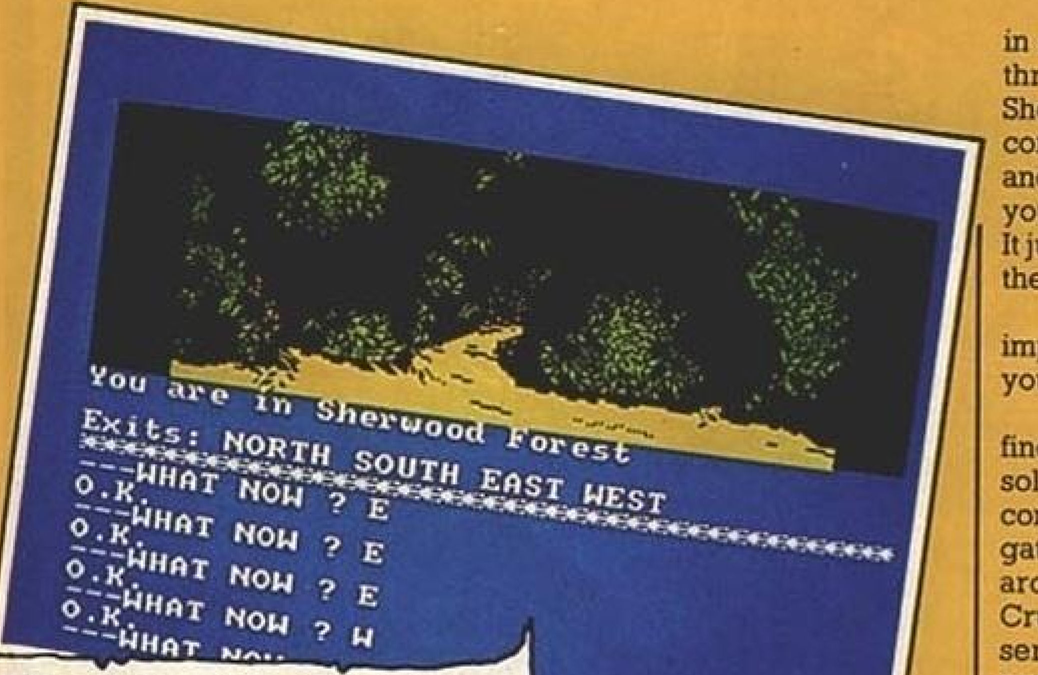


Believe me, fellow travellers, the Pilgrim has had a heavy month. The Cowled Crusader has just emerged from doing time in the dungeons of wicked Guy of Gisburne, courtesy of Adventure International's *Robin ofSherwood*. And then, to cap it all, I got jumped and gaoled in yet another castle, this time in the mythical land of *Ashkeron*. And if all THAT wasn't sufficiently humiliating, I ended up being stabbed by a pesky druid in Celtic Britain. But have faith. My rod, staff, and miraculous powers of recuperation have enabled me to bring you this month's red hot reviews, so drop your burdens and read on...

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Adventure International, £9.95 cass

Adventure International have been raking it in recently with some very successful releases on a number of machines. Not content with *The Hulk* and*Spiderman*, they've now released *Robin of Sherwood*, a text-and-graphics game based on the TV series of the same name.



```
You are in Sherwood Forest
Exits: NORTH SOUTH EAST WEST
*****************************************
---WHAT NOW ? E
O.K.
---WHAT NOW ? E
O.K.
---WHAT NOW ? E
O.K.
---WHAT NOW ? W
O.K.
---WHAT NO
```

▶ This is a bit of Sherwood Forest. Unfortunately most bits look very similar. Mapping the forest is essential, so remember that there is a unique display for each location – however similar they may appear. So, when you move in a direction and are rewarded with an identical display, you know that you have reached a dead end – whatever the location description says.

The program is written by Brian Howarth, who may be familiar to more experienced adventurers as the man behind the old Digital Fantasia range (*Ten Little Indians, The Wizard Akyrz*, and so on). Since working for Adventure International he's produced *Gremlins* (and *Supergran* for Tynesoft), so he's a man who should be able to turn out a good game if anyone can.

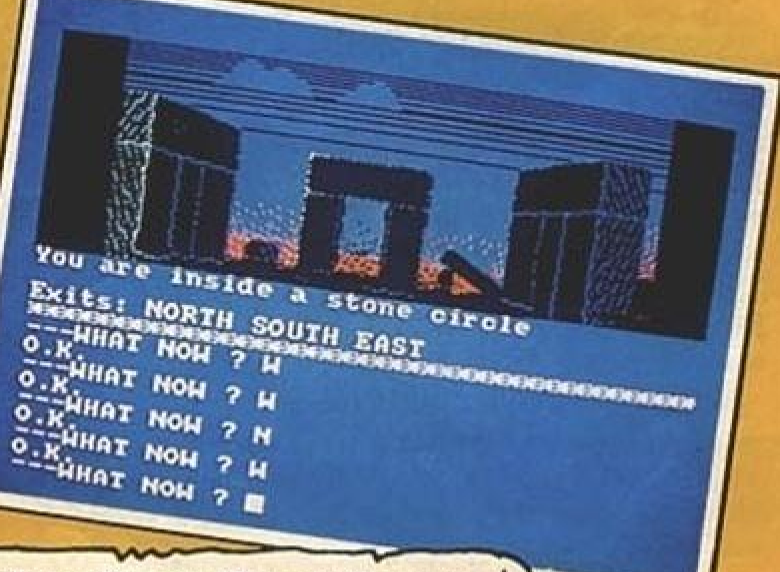
Unfortunately I can't help thinking that old Brian has got a little lazy of late. Don't get me wrong, *Robin* is quite a good game and Mike Woodroffe's graphics are excellent, but there are definite signs of short-cuts in the programming.

The game is in split-screen format with a very attractive display for each of the 70-odd locations. Entering commands is, however, another matter altogether. First, the program doesn't tell you which words it doesn't understand, replying simply 'Huh?' or 'I don't understand.' This in itself wouldn't be so bad, but at the same time the program will also ACCEPT a whole load of words it doesn't understand, but simply take no action.

For example, at the start of the game you find yourself locked in a dungeon. Once you've escaped from there, you must race through the castle escaping the guards and make your way to Sherwood Forest and safety. At this stage (and at any other stage, come to that) you can enter such commands as 'Hide under bed' and the program will accept them quite happily. Does this mean you're hiding under the bed? No, my fellow travellers, it does not. It just means that the program is being a little lazy and not making the effort to set the record straight.

Another small criticism here – the program appears to have implemented its own key-fetch routine, and if you're a fast typist you'll find it can't keep up.

Once you've escaped from the castle, you are given the task of finding the Six Touchstones of Rhiannon, an ordeal that will involve solving a number of other puzzles (including winning an archery contest). The Pilgrim can't help feeling that this 'go forth and gather treasures' lark is a bit old-hat now. In fact, after wandering around Sherwood Forest and solving a few puzzles, the Cowled Crusader began to think that, despite the recent showing of the TV series, the game itself is really rather lacking in state-of-the-art programming techniques. It seems to me that Adventure International's policy is to release games that are tied to the latest in media hype but are, in fact, not much better than the games we were all playing two years ago on our Yecchtrums (if we were unfortunate enough to have one).



```
You are inside a stone circle
Exits: NORTH SOUTH EAST
*****************************************
---WHAT NOW ? W
O.K.
---WHAT NOW ? W
O.K.
---WHAT NOW ? N
O.K.
---WHAT NOW ? W
O.K.
---WHAT NOW ? █
```

▶ This stone circle is called Rhiannon's Wheel. You'll have to travel through quite a bit of Sherwood Forest to find it.

This is all very well, but haven't AI heard of interactive characters? And what about a bit of original scriptwriting? OK, so no-one's sallied off into Sherwood Forest to bag a few touchstones before, but I reckon there must be dozens of adventures with plots that are pretty near identical.

Still, there are some nice graphic touches. Animated waterfalls, close-ups of Herne the Hunter (who he? I hear you cry – good question), and lots of forest scenery. In fact rather too much forest scenery – out of all the locations there are only about fifteen of interest – all the rest are trees and shrubbery.

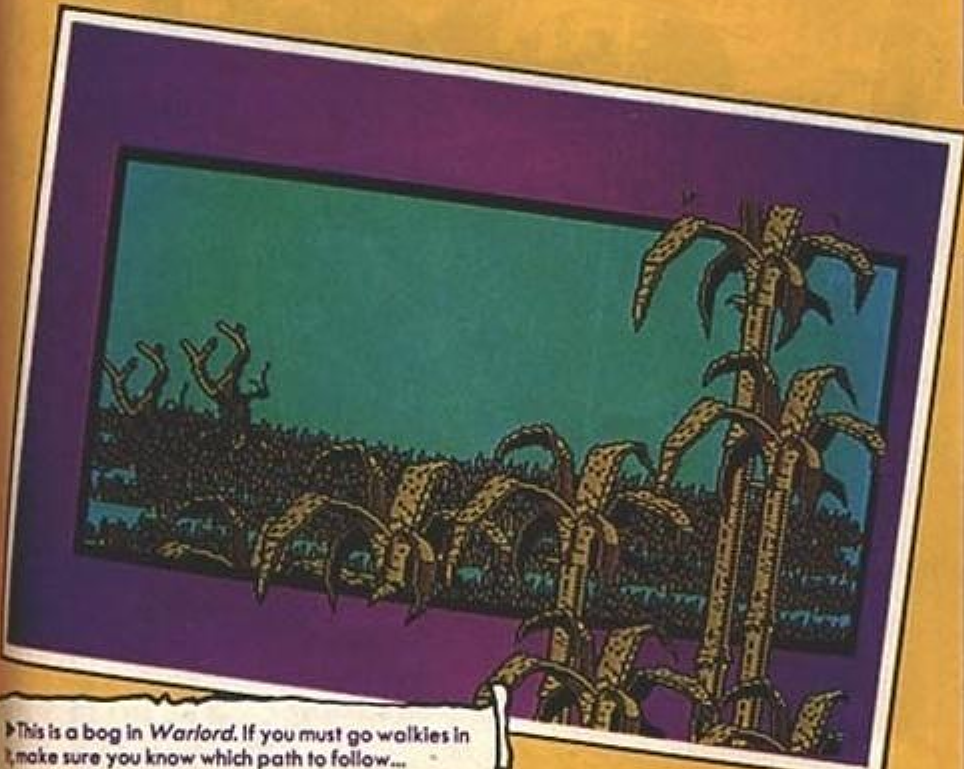
This game will probably sell like hot cakes, and people will go on thinking that a game like this is a good adventure. Well it ain't. It may look pretty, it may have glamorous graphics and pictures of movie stars on the cassette cover, but deep down inside it's just one of those old pick-up-and-examine puzzlers with a small vocabulary. And everyone will write in and tell the Pilgrim what a boring old twit he is and why didn't he think *Robin of Sherwood* was the greatest thing since *Gremlins*. Perhaps it is, but the Cowled Crusader has hopes of greater things and will continue to badger software companies on your behalf to improve their product.

WARLORD

Interceptor, £6.00 cass

The Pilgrim trumpeted the news last month about Interceptor's new game *Warlord*, echoing their boast that the graphics would be 'far superior to anything that's gone before'. Well, the good news is that the graphics ARE pretty fancy (though more about this in a minute) and, even more important, the game itself isn't too bad either.

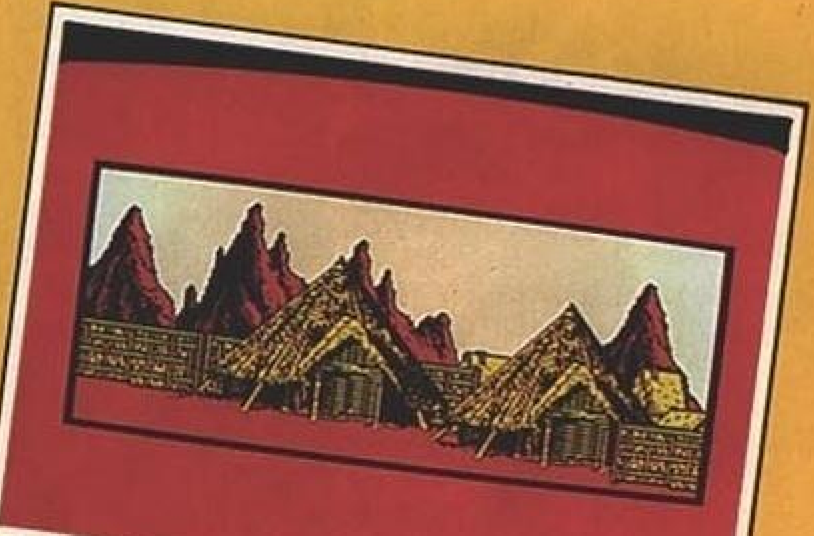
Warlord throws you back to Celtic times and has you meeting up with various Celtic deities, each of whom will grant you a gift in return for a small favour. What these favours are I shall naturally not reveal, though the Pilgrim has to say that he would have preferred it if they hadn't been quite so obvious. For example, if you come across a hare struggling in a trap, you're bound to FREE HARE, aren't you? Oooops! Me and my big mouth...



▶ This is a bog in *Warlord*. If you must go walkies in it, make sure you know which path to follow...

When you do come across a really tricky puzzle, it's likely to be a linguistic one, and that for the simple reason that Interceptor Games insist on you typing in clever things like 'Jump into the boat' rather than 'Enter boat' or whatever. This is all very well, but it's rather frustrating not being able to solve a puzzle when you're rightly convinced that you know the answer and the only that's holding you up is the vocab. I admit, however, to a certain perverse pleasure in overcoming problems like this – and I suspect that others do too.

About those graphics, though... You'll see some examples of them on these pages and there's no denying that they're quite special. I don't, however, think that they're all that great an advance over previous Interceptor pics, almost all of which have been truly excellent from the word go. The another annoyance is that since they're stored as a series of drawing routines (rather than as whole bit-mapped screens, which would of course be impossible in the memory available) they do take some time to draw.



▶ This was the nearest thing to a Butlins holiday camp in Celtic Britain. Check out *Warlord* for further details..........

Luckily, they only flash up when you first enter a location, but you have to be careful when you want to recall a location text by typing LOOK, since this will force you to endure the picture drawing all over again. The best thing if you want to check out the contents of a location is not to type LOOK, but to dodge into the adjacent location and back again, which will of course reprint the desired description on the screen without boring you with the graphics first.

The other thing about the graphics is that there aren't an awful lot of them. However, what you get in quality you have to make up for by cutting the quantity.

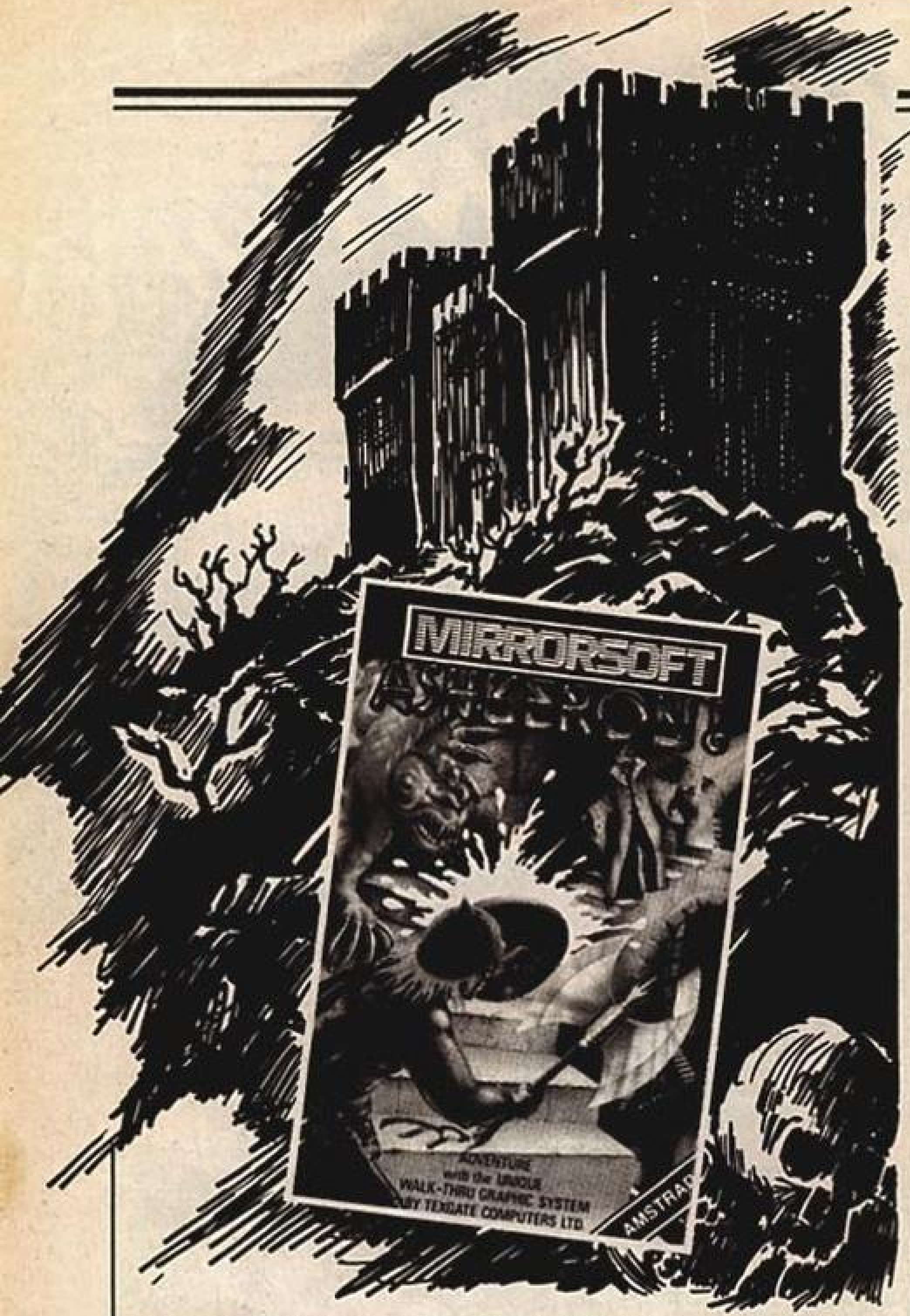
The Pilgrim has been known to be rather harsh on Interceptor games before. Let me just say that if you like lots of text, they're not for you. Descriptions are extremely brief, there aren't that many puzzles to solve, and some of their games have been fit for only a couple of hours playing unless you're a complete amateur. However, I have to admit that *Warlord* looks like being one of their best yet. Armed with rod and staff, the Cowled Crusader was still battling it out after three hours, which, when you consider that *Forest at the Worlds End* yielded its secrets in under 50 minutes, must say something for *Warlord*.

ASHKERON

Mirrorsoft, £6.95

Talking of pick-up-and-examine puzzlers, Mirrorsoft have just brought out a game with a plot that sounds as corny as they come – buzz off to the wicked wizard's castle and grab a few stolen treasures that must be restored to their rightful owner.

Well, hold it right there, fellow pilgrims, because this game is


MIRRORSOFT
ASHKERON!
ADVENTURE with the UNIQUE WALK-THRU GRAPHIC SYSTEM BY TEXGATE COMPUTERS LTD
AMSTRAD

rather more interesting than the plot might leave you to believe. First, it's got some nice real-time elements. Those of you who have played *The Hobbit* will be familiar with the 'You wait...Time passes...' type of message that occasionally flashes up on the screen when you don't bother to enter anything. This happens in *Ashkeron*, and is a sign that even if you're sitting back, the program is actually up to something. Occasionally a slimy green dwarf will appear and brandish a dagger, which if you're not careful will soon end the game for you.

But that's not all that's going on – castle guards wander around and will, if you don't keep on the move, chuck you into a dungeon which isn't easy to get out of (at least not without a bit of light to see by); cooks, butlers, and burly serfs will all indulge in (occasionally helpful) conversation and you can even talk back to them if you're feeling chatty.

But perhaps the most striking thing about this game is the display. First, the text is nicely picked out in different colours, and second the graphics themselves actually scroll on and off the screen according to which direction you're going in.

This is really quite a striking effect, and although the graphics window is quite small and the pictures themselves slightly rudimentary it is still quite a thrill to climb up the north-west tower and see the rooms scroll downwards as you mount higher.

In fact, quite in contrast to *Robin of Sherwood*, there is really some quite acceptable programming in *Ashkeron*. The keyboard beeps confirmation when you hit a key and some of the puzzles are quite ingenious. You can also play a 'random game' in which the various objects you need are randomly distributed, making the game a little different each time you play.

Where *Ashkeron* loses out slightly is in the scope of the game – there aren't exactly dozens of locations – but what there is is excellently presented. The game as a whole has a slightly naive feeling to it, as if it might have been designed for the younger adventurer, but don't let that put you off. I hope that whoever programmed *Ashkeron* brings us another game in the not too distant future – and perhaps he can improve the graphics just a bit to bring us something really special.

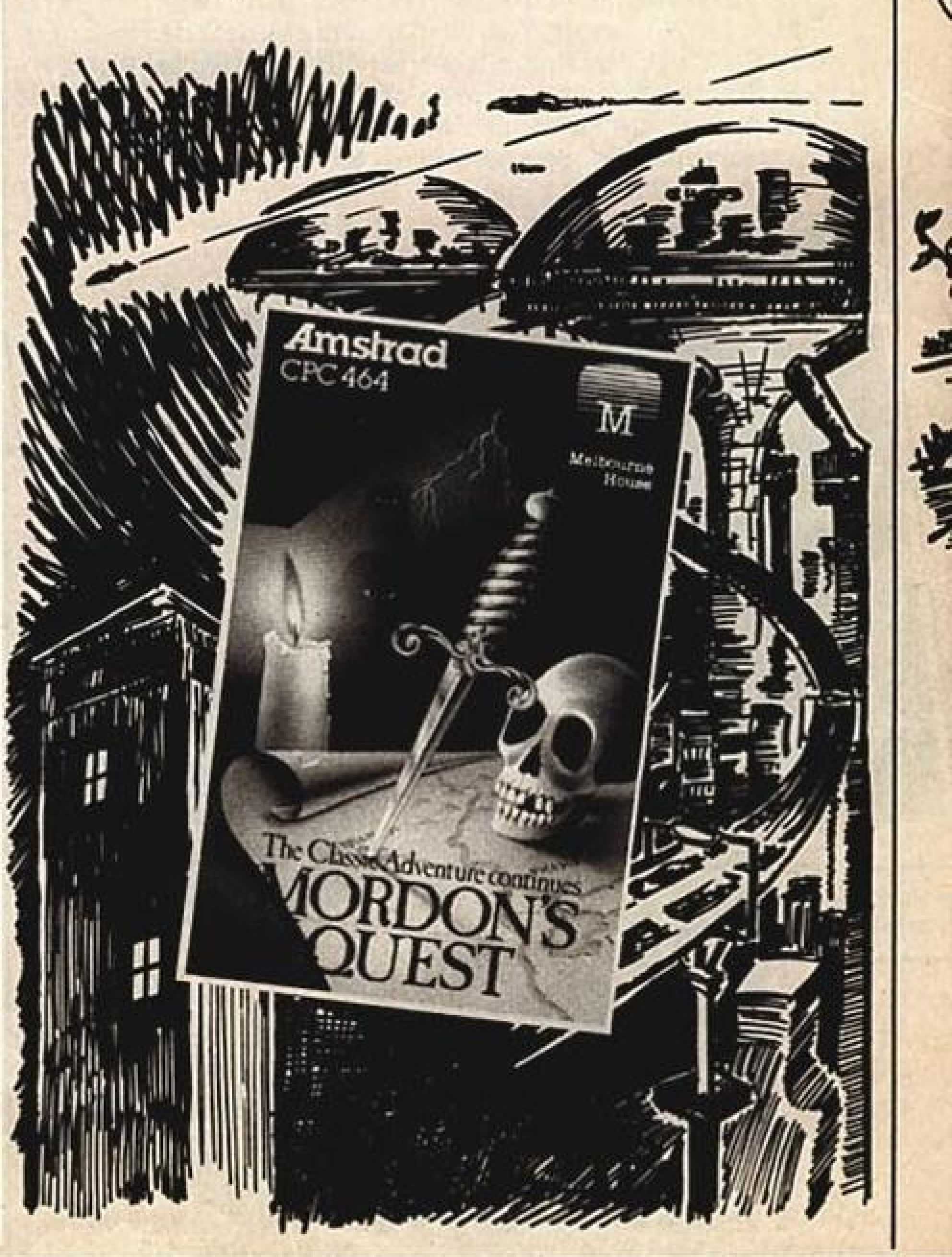
MORDON'S QUEST
Melbourne House, £6.95 cass

Adventurers all over the country still play *Colossal Adventure* in one of its many versions, so it's surprising that no-one has ever come up with the idea of doing some kind of follow-up...

Well now someone has. The gent what programmed *Classic Adventure* (Melbourne House's version of the aforementioned game) has now come up with *Mordon's Quest*, an "extremely complex text adventure". The plot is something of a blend between Level 9's *Lords of Time* and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Some frightfully superior beings have made a muck-up of things (superior beings always seem to do this, don't they?) and, having created a fabulous but rather ill-defined 'machine', have lost control of it to an unprincipled colleague. In other words, the goodies are in trouble and you must sally forth and grab the various parts of this 'machine', thereby setting the universe to rights and getting your money's worth from Melbourne House.

Talking of getting your money's worth, the Cowled Crusader had a good laugh over the beginning of this game. When old Mordon rose out of the floorboards and asked whether the Pilgrim would undertake the vital task, the rascally rod-bearer answered NO! Since this threatened to end the game there and then, the following message flashed up on the screen: "We would like to point out that, hopefully, you have paid good money for this adventure, and we suggest you start again and co-operate with Mordon."

I haven't laughed so much for ages. Having said that, though, there wasn't all that much to laugh about in the rest of the game. However, *Mordon's Quest* isn't too bad... it's text-only but the location descriptions are pretty meaty. There are one or two quite tricky puzzles in it, and the program plays quite a clever trick on you right at the beginning by dumping you in a maze from which there appears to be no exit. Well, the fact is that there IS no exit! Not, that is, until you make use of a certain object.



The Pilgrim's a staff writer

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But, whatever the good points about the descriptions, it has to be said that this game isn't exactly state of the art when it comes to programming. You can't enter much more than the old verb-noun inputs, and the program is a bit annoying in that it doesn't properly monitor your entries – for example, typing "Examine Qwerty" gets the reply "You see nothing special" – but I reckon that if I saw a Qwerty I'd think it was quite extraordinary. Ah well...

Mordon's Quest does however have a goodly number of locations and will keep most adventurers, especially beginners, busy for a long time. I don't however think it should be compared with the original *Classic Adventure* – the design of the game isn't nearly so atmospheric, and the puzzles not so original... but then you can't get much more original than THE original, can you?

	Atmosphere	Interaction	Challenge	AA-Rating
Mordon's Quest	75%	65%	82%	78%
Robin of Sherwood	62%	72%	68%	68%
Warlord	68%	70%	65%	70%
Ashkeron	60%	75%	70%	70%

Clue Sniffing with The Pilgrim

Here's the next in the on-going series of Pilgrim's Tips. If a game's getting up your nose, this is where you'll find the answers. One reader wrote in to say that she was going to photocopy the Clue Sniffing column and paste the clues into a small booklet... Well, I don't know if you need to go that far, but I know from my own experience that 'help columns' are worth hanging on to, because you never know when and where you're going to run into trouble. Next month we'll be printing some of the cryptic clues sent in by readers in response to our *Red Moon* competition, and we'll also be kicking off another great freebie contest... Meanwhile, here's some help from slightly older games.

RETURN TO EDEN
Can't find the fish fungus? Well, find somewhere fertile and try growing a **houseplant**.

COLOSSAL ADVENTURE
At your wit's end? Keep presssssssing those keys. Trolls can't BEAR animals.

ADVENTURE QUEST
If the ghosts cause trouble, just brazen it out.

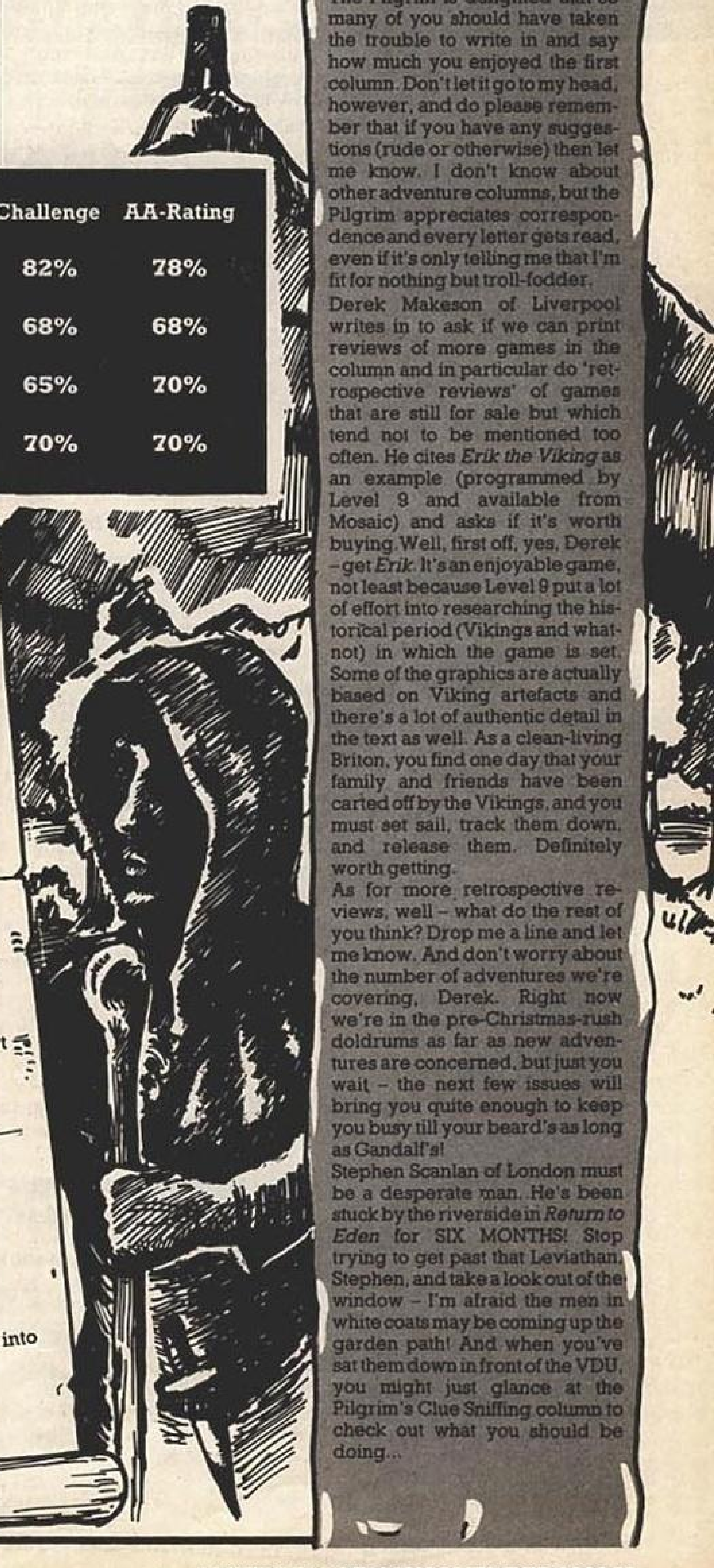
LORDS OF TIME
Play a joke on the Jester. Big cats have small appetites.

ERIK THE VIKING
Can't get into the church? Adopt a more religious attitude.

SNOWBALL
The cat could stop you slipping up by slurping slime.

EMERALD ISLE
The glue pot will get you out of a sticky situation if you buzz into trouble.

GREMLINS
Press those buttons! And get rid of those Gremlins in a flash!



Pilgrim Post

The Pilgrim is delighted that so many of you should have taken the trouble to write in and say how much you enjoyed the first column. Don't let it go to my head, however, and do please remember that if you have any suggestions (rude or otherwise) then let me know. I don't know about other adventure columns, but the Pilgrim appreciates correspondence and every letter gets read, even if it's only telling me that I'm fit for nothing but troll-fodder.

Derek Makeson of Liverpool writes in to ask if we can print reviews of more games in the column and in particular do 'retrospective reviews' of games that are still for sale but which tend not to be mentioned too often. He cites *Erik the Viking* as an example (programmed by Level 9 and available from Mosaic) and asks if it's worth buying. Well, first off, yes, Derek – get *Erik*. It's an enjoyable game, not least because Level 9 put a lot of effort into researching the historical period (Vikings and whatnot) in which the game is set. Some of the graphics are actually based on Viking artefacts and there's a lot of authentic detail in the text as well. As a clean-living Briton, you find one day that your family and friends have been carted off by the Vikings, and you must set sail, track them down, and release them. Definitely worth getting.

As for more retrospective reviews, well – what do the rest of you think? Drop me a line and let me know. And don't worry about the number of adventures we're covering, Derek. Right now we're in the pre-Christmas-rush doldrums as far as new adventures are concerned, but just you wait – the next few issues will bring you quite enough to keep you busy till your beard's as long as Gandalf's!

Stephen Scanlan of London must be a desperate man. He's been stuck by the riverside in *Return to Eden* for SIX MONTHS! Stop trying to get past that Leviathan, Stephen, and take a look out of the window – I'm afraid the men in white coats may be coming up the garden path! And when you've sat them down in front of the VDU, you might just glance at the Pilgrim's Clue Sniffing column to check out what you should be doing...

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The Pilgrim Peeks... The Pilgrim Pokes...

People tend not to PEEK and POKE adventure programs to the same extent as arcade games, where the temptations of infinite lives are obvious and often involve altering only a single memory location. Adventures are, however, susceptible to PEEKing and POKEing – for moving objects around, checking out undiscovered locations, and generally indulging in a very healthy spirit of discovery and... well, adventure!

So – if at any time any of you budding programmers come up with some useful tips for us poor Pilgrims, then let us know. If you can move the snake in *Colossal Adventure* from the caverns to the cottage then I want to know!

Meanwhile, one obvious example of the benefits to gained from a bit of byte adventuring is cracking programs so that you can, if you have a 664, 6128, or 464 + DDI, transfer them from tape to disc.

The sad truth is that most adventure software houses do not release their games on disc. This may change in future as disc systems become more popular, but in the meantime, even if you can load *Sorcery +* from disc in a few seconds, you may still have to wait up to 12 minutes for your favourite adventure to load from tape. Annoying, isn't it?

Well, the obvious answer is to make a back-up copy on disc. At this point, the Pilgrim should make a very strong statement about ripping off programs – it raises prices and hurts all of us, so don't do it. I do not, however, see any reason why users should not transfer their programs from one medium to another, so here goes with some helpful hints...

The first thing you need to do to transfer a game from tape to disc is find out what sort of program it is and where it lives in memory. The information you need is stored in the tape header, full details of which have been published in the Amsoft Firmware Manual (SOFT 158) and to which you should refer if you are seriously interested in what goes on in Arnold's insides. However, to make matters simple, here's a brief program which reads a header from tape or disc and prints on the screen the information you need to know:

```
10 REM load a file header and report
20 MEMORY &8E00
30 INPUT "Press D to read from disc, any other Key for tape...":dd$
40 IF UPPER$(dd$)="D" THEN 60 ELSE |TAPE.IN
50 '
60 length=&9000:type=&9002:location=&9004
70 execute=&9006:header=&9008: buffread=&8F00:inlength=&9010:inname=&9020
80 DIM t$(4)
90 DEF FNget(address)=PEEK(address)+256*PEEK(address+1)
100 '
110 FOR x=0 TO 41: READ x$: x$="&"+x$: POKE buffread+x,VAL(x$): NEXT x
120 '
130 INPUT "Filename ",name$: POKE (inlength),LEN(name$)
140 FOR x=1 TO LEN(name$): POKE(inname+x-1), ASC(MID$(name$,x,1)): NEXT x
150 '
160 CALL buffread
170 type=(FNget(type)/2) AND 7
180 t$(0)="Internal BASIC":t$(1)="Binary":t$(2)="Screen image":t$(3)="ASCII"
190 PRINT "Type: ";t$(type)
200 PRINT "Location: ";HEX$(FNget(location))
210 PRINT "Execution address: ";HEX$(FNget(execute))
220 PRINT "Length: ";HEX$(FNget(length))
230 DATA "3a","10","90","47","21","20","90","11"
240 DATA "40","90","cd","77","bc","ed","43","00"
250 DATA "90","32","02","90","ed","53","04","90"
260 DATA "22","08","90","dd","2a","08","90","dd"
270 DATA "5e","1a","dd","56","1b","ed","53","06"
280 DATA "90","c9"
```

To run this program you need to know the name of the file concerned, which can of course be ascertained by using the CAT command. The program will then tell you where in memory the program begins, how long it is, and (most important) in the case of machine code programs it will tell you the execution address. It will also tell you (as the CAT command does on a tape-based system) what sort of program it is.

Most adventures are stored on tape with a short BASIC loader program, saved in protected format (see page 2.7 of the 464 manual), followed by a series of machine code files. You can ignore any files starting at address &C000 because they will simply be loading screens. In most cases, it's the machine code (i.e. binary) files that you will need to transfer. A good example is Melbourne House's *Classic Adventure*, which can be simply transferred as an auto-run machine code file with no need to transfer the BASIC loader.

A problem arises, however, when you come across a machine code file with an execution address of zero. This means not that you should CALL 0 to run the program (which would reset the computer) but that the entry point for the program has to be supplied by the user at runtime... and in the case of a commercial game that means supplied by the BASIC protected loader program. The only way to get round this is to LIST the BASIC loader program itself to find out how it boots up the machine code program. This involves cracking the Amstrad protection system, which (although unfortunately ridiculously easy) we will not be helping you with.

If you're not a machine code programmer, however, or feel that cracking the protection system is too much for you, then don't despair. Over the next few months, the Pilgrim will be giving you occasional short BASIC programs which will automatically transfer certain games from tape to disc, so keep a look-out.

For the machine code buffs amongst you, just a few final words of warning. Most adventure files are quite long and tend (because they were designed for the tape-based 464) to overwrite some or all of the AMSDOS variables when transferred to disc. This means that you must either relocate AMSDOS (using KL INIT BACK) or be very clever about how you manipulate your data.

Next month, we'll show you how to transfer *Robin of Sherwood* to disc – a boon because it's a brilliant game that takes ages to load!

THE LORDS OF ADVENTURE

Don't forget, if you've cracked a game (or games) and want to make friends round the country, then drop me a line on a postcard saying which adventures you can offer help on and giving the address readers should write to. The Pilgrim has often found that in this way adventurers can build up a large circle of friends around the globe, and all for the price of a stamp, so get scribbling...

Meanwhile, Tony Treadwell (who may be known to some veteran Pilgrims as he has rescued many a poor soul from the Goblin's Dungeon and elsewhere) has phoned in to say that his Questline, a free adventure help service, is only too happy to answer cries for help from Amstrad owners. So, for assistance on nearly all games, check out the address and phone number that follows. And don't forget, whenever you write to a fellow adventurer for help, include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the reply.

Tony Treadwell, 17 Headley Way, Headington, Oxford. Tel: Oxford 68637

Tony therefore becomes the very first Amstrad Action Lord of Adventure – come on you lot out there, write in and keep him company!

Calling all adventure programmers...

The Pilgrim doesn't just want to review games from the big boys, like Melbourne House, Level 9, and so on... He also very much wants to write about the games that you, the readers, have written yourselves – especially if you are going to make them available in some way (perhaps through advertising in this amazing mag) to other readers.So, if you've Quilled a game, or cobbled one together in BASIC, or whatever, don't hesitate to send the Cowled Crusader a copy of your handiwork. If it's good, he'll tell the world... if it's terrible, well... better to be pasted by the Pilgrim than to live in dull obscurity! So come on, make your mark on the world and let me know what you've been up to...

ADVENTURE NEWS

Kuma come-back

Well, Kuma got a right Pilgrim Pasting in last month's column for daring to produce *Shadow of the Bore* and *North Sea Bunion Adventure*. I know the games only cost £3.95, but, well, what can I say? Still, Kuma are, as we know, capable of great things gameswise, and they're planning to put the record straight with *The White Feather Cloak*, a full-scale pics'n'prose number that will, I hope, restore their reputation. You may even get a book with it as well... Watch this space.

Holiday horror

Melbourne House are still struggling with *Lord of the Rings*, now due out in November or December. Everyone expected to see it at the PCW show... and sure enough there on the screen were the most amazing graphics... only trouble being that they came from *Lord of the Rings*, the film, and not *Lord of the Rings*, the game.Ah well...As it is, good ol' Melbourne are still dishing out the goods – watch out for *Terrormolinos*, a day in the death of British holiday makers on the Costa Toomucha. Programmed in state-of-the-art 'Saucyvision', the game takes the dirty seaside postcard approach right out of Manuel's back pocket and into your Arnold. A Quilled text and graphics adventure from the programmers of *Hampstead*, this one will set you back £7.95. See next month's column (God willing) for the full Pilgrim treatment...

Level 9 in paradise

Level 9 are at it again. They always are, and for that we Pilgrims must be eternally thankful. Next in line looks like being *The Worm in Paradise*, third in the Silicon Dream trilogy (starting with *Snowball* and *Return to Eden*). Costing the usual £9.95, this game apparently defies categorisation, but we can reveal that it will be the first 'science-fiction-political adventure' and could be in the shops by the time you read this.

Set on the same planet as *Return to Eden*, you have to beat the system and reach Paradise. Sounds like game designer Pete Austin has really given vent to everything he's got on this one, which means it will be worth the usual second, third, and fourth glance that one gives Level 9 games...

RamJam smasher

News has reached the Pilgrim of a game that could be well be one of the smash adventure releases of 1985 – *3 Days in Carpathia* is due out soon from the RamJam Corporation, a company previously responsible for bringing out an above average game on the Yecchtrum called *Valkyrie 17*.

3 Days in Carpathia is a real-time game, which means that even while you sit back, the characters go on living their own busy lives. What's more, they are sensitive to your actions and will change their behaviour according to whether or not they approve of what you do.

Earthquake

Interceptor, not content with *Warlord*, are going one better with *Earthquake*, a pics'n'prose game with, gasp, animated graphics. The brushwork on adventures has come a long way since *The Hobbit* , and *Robin of Sherwood* has one animated scene (a waterfall)... It'll be interesting to see what Interceptor, with their reputation for truly Leonardo-esque screens, can come up with. At the moment the game is 'in three parts' – as soon as they get their act together, the Pilgrim will let you know more... Meanwhile, if you enjoyed *Heroes of Karn*, you'll be delighted to know that *Citadel of Karn* is also on the way from Interceptor, though sadly we may have to wait a while for it's predecessor *Empire of Karn*. Although this series is hugely popular, part of the problem has been that programmer Ian Gray has moved on to business software... Shame on you, Ian! When was the last time you kissed a frog in a spreadsheet?

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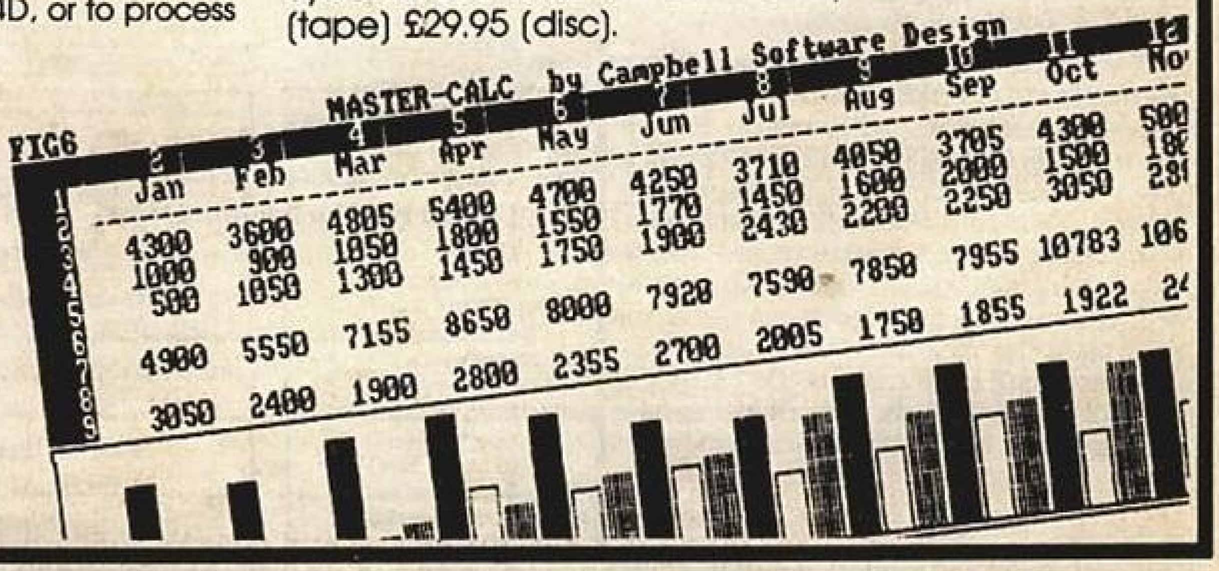

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But you've got to deserve a prize of this magnitude and importance. We're not going to chuck the stuff at the first Wally who walks in the door. Blurb Writer and the Brentwood boys don't operate that way – this is a classy comp.

What we need are your playing tips on the six Amsoft classics named below. Pokes, diagrams, maps, strategies – all of these are eligible. You can send entries for as many games as you like, but prizes are limited to one per personoid. The author of the best tip for each game will receive that juicy reward, as well as having his (or her) name and tip featured in the glorious print of Amstrad Action.

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SUPER PIPELINE 2: Keep that water flowing. Plug those holes. Where's that spanner? And look out for the lobster.

AIRWOLF: Helicopters are bad enough, but underground? Let's get the poor scientists out of there.

LORDS OF MIDNIGHT: It's about time someone came up with a way of settling that Doomdark's hash once and for all. Any offers?

ROLAND IN SPACE: Him again. He's still got that phone box, and he still needs your help.

Because this is a bit more demanding than yer usual stick-in-a-pin-and-wish- for-luck comp, I'm giving you longer to get your entries in. The closing date is November 25th and Blurb Writer's decision is final. Send the stuff to: *Amsoft Competition, Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS*

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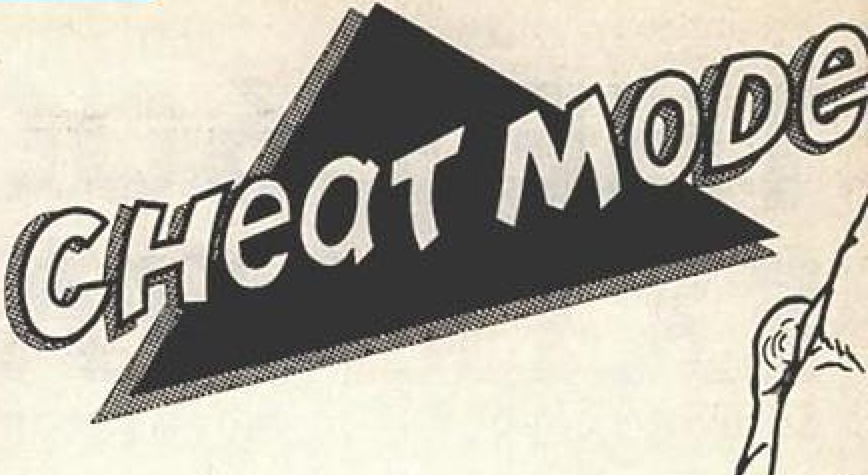


The section where your tips, pokes and devious game-busting ploys are relayed to the nation

BEATING BOULDERDASH

Amstrad Action's publisher Chris Anderson admits to having a dangerous passion for this classic game, brilliantly converted to the Amstrad by Mirrorsoft. Since it's one of only a very few games he's actually completed, we reluctantly agreed to let him outline his playing tactics.

First thing to remember about playing *Boulder Dash* is to leave yourself enough time. Starting a game at, say, 10pm can have unfortunate consequences for your night's sleep.

Before you can get anywhere you'll need to become very familiar with the way the different game elements behave: eg. the fact that fireflies always turn left at junctions, while butterflies turn right, the fact that boulders will topple off other boulders, jewels or walls, but not off a piece of earth. You should develop to a fine art the following techniques.

BLASTING: The thoroughly enjoyable action of blowing up a firefly or butterfly, normally by letting it chase you upwards through earth until you reach a boulder, when you move left or right allowing it fall on the pursuing enemy.

◆

BAMBOOZLING: Another satisfying way of dealing with fireflies – create a rectangular path in the earth moving in an anti-clockwise direction as the firefly chases you, then make your escape. It'll left running in circles. Now for a run-down of the 16 caves, bearing in mind that that tactics on each one may be alter on the five different levels.

◆

◆

BLISTERING: The somewhat dangerous art of deliberately moving down past a pile of boulders, causing them to topple after you, but making sure you move out of the way right or left before they hit you. Normally to clear earth next to a pile of boulders it's safer to start at the bottom and move up, but there are many times, especially on the higher levels when Blistering is an essential technique both in time-saving and in reaching otherwise inaccessible jewels.

◆

BUTTONING: The use of the fire-button to "affect" a neighbouring square without actually entering it. There are numerous occasions when this will make your life much safer. As well as collecting jewels this way, you can also use it to dig earth or push boulders. In addition, all the great *Boulder Dash* players use this technique to go through the caves' flashing exits. This has no playing value but is definitely the classy way to do it.

◆

BLOCKING: Another important way of staying alive when being chased by enemies – move horizontally under a boulder, allowing it to fall and block the path behind you.

A. INTRO

Once you're used to the gameplay it doesn't pose serious problems on any level. But you should make it a matter of pride to collect every jewel.

B. ROOMS

Again, easy on the lower levels. On 4 and 5 there are a lot of fireflies around. You must deal with them by blocking, blasting, bamboozling or just dodging. At least the cave is near enough to the start for it to be easy to practise on.

C. MAZE

Time limit can be a problem on this one. You need to work out an efficient route to take you from the start at top left to the exit at bottom right, collecting every single jewel on the way. On most levels the best way is to start by moving down to the bottom of the cave, then right, then up again through the middle of the cave, then right, then back down. Look out for boulders toppling off walls.

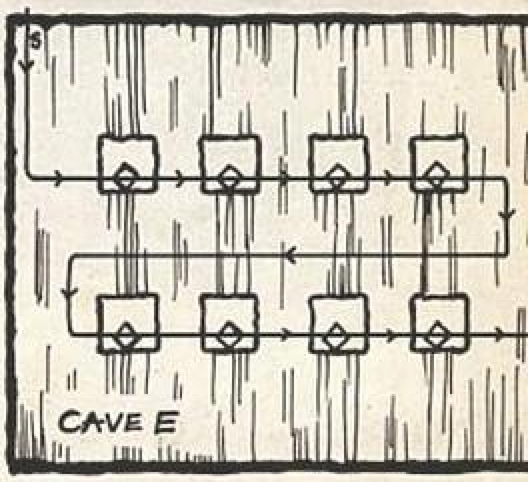
D. BUTTERFLIES

This one's fairly easy. Position yourself within one square of the first butterfly den, and on the same vertical line as a boulder. Choosing your moment carefully, button free the piece of earth separating you from the butterfly, and then immediately move up to the boulder and out of the way, so that it falls on the pursuing butterfly. Collect the jewels and repeat for the other three dens. Remember, your start point can either be immediately above the den, or a full square away on either side.

E. GUARDS

Lots of different ways of doing this one. The quickest and classiest, albeit slightly risky, is depicted in the diagram. Wait to the left of the first den. When the firefly just reaches the top left corner, move right straight through the den collecting the jewel. DON'T STOP! Just keep moving through the next three dens. If your timing is right, you'll go straight through unharmed. What's more the last firefly is left bamboozled and actually blocks the others from chasing you. This means you can take your time and do the same thing on the bottom row, as is required on the higher levels.

If you prefer a safer method, do the same thing, but starting from the right of each row of dens. You move left through the bottom of the den while the firefly is moving right along the top of the den.



F. FIREFLY DENS

On lower levels it's possible to do this cave by blasting each firefly in turn. But a more elegant method is that shown in the diagram, which works on all five levels, although the precise routes will alter each time. Basically you create a clear circular path (clearing a space at the bottom to start with may help) which is completed by releasing all four fireflies at once, in a dash from A to B. As they make their way off round the circle you double back and follow them, collecting the jewels (C,D,E,F) on the way. If you need more than four jewels, make your way to G, making sure you block your path with a boulder. Then create another loop, making your way to H before dashing up to G and then coming back down to collect the jewels and go to the exit. The main thing to ensure is that the

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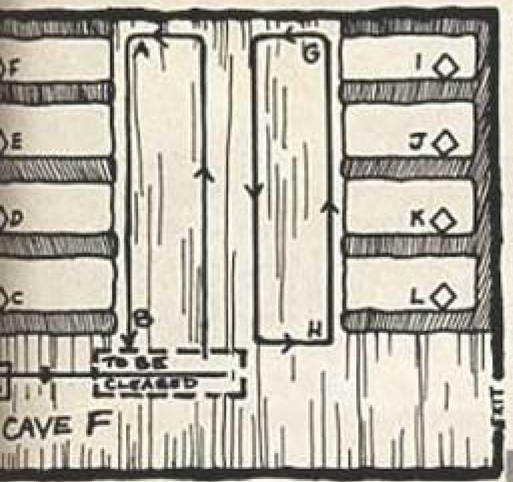
loops you create are not blocked by boulders, or the fireflies will double back and cause you problems.



G. AMOEBA

It's awfully easy to panic on this screen, especially if you get a fast-growing amoeba. You must sprint to the bottom of the screen and get blocking as fast as possible. Don't clear too much earth at the very bottom, or boulders will just pile up instead of forming a wall. It's normally best to complete one side, then do the top and then the other side. The last gap should always be blocked by Rockford himself. This makes it a lot easier to collect the jewels that result. When collecting the jewels don't forget to do plenty of buttoning.

H. ENCHANTED WALL

Normally not too difficult, although time can be a problem on the higher levels. After clearing the space under the wall, it's worth clearing a bit of space above it before activating the wall, because otherwise the enchantment may not last long enough. DON'T dislodge boulders one space either side of the wall as other boulders which land on these should topple inwards onto the wall.

On level one there's an annoying firefly just above the wall – it's worth blasting it before doing anything else or it'll get in the way. Just use the pile of boulders immediately above it.

I. GREED

This oh-so-aptly named screen is always good fun. Normally the right technique is to unblock the plug near the start, then move through the low, horizontal corridor collecting the jewels there, and on to unblock the right-hand plug. While those boulders are falling, come back through the corridor, get as many jewels as you can from the first heap of fallen matter. Then go up through the gap into the main cavern. Start cleaning up on the left, then move right. You should be able to go right through to the right-hand side, clean up there, and then move down to the second pile of matter. By the time you've gobble up all those jewels you should have enough to make your way to the exit.

The one exception to this is level four, where you must first do the right-hand plug and do all the cleaning up you can, top and bottom. Then do the same on the left-hand side.

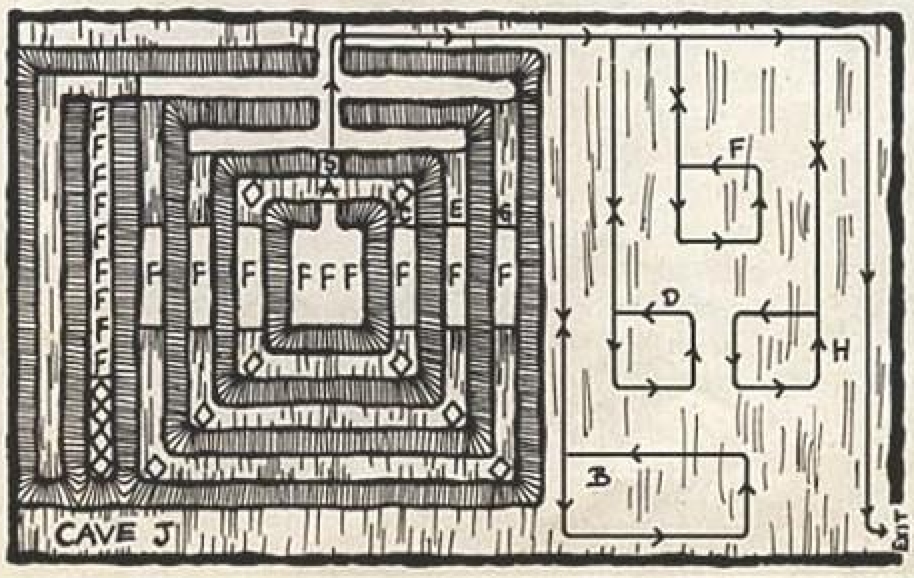
Buttoning is a very important technique for this screen, allowing you to collect the jewels other techniques cannot reach.

J. TRACKS

It's possible to solve this screen by creating a giant maze in the earth on the right in the shape of a comb, then releasing fireflies and collecting the jewels while they make their way round the maze.

But an easier method is to bamboozle the fireflies one den at a time, by creating tracks in the pattern shown in the diagram. From the start position, collect the four safe jewels at the top, then clear the earth at A and dash out of the rock maze, making your way to B. Wait there until all three fireflies have gone past, then complete the rectangle, leaving them bamboozled. Repeat the process three more times by moving from C-D-E-F-G-H.

Then, at your leisure you can pick up the remaining jewels you need and make your way to the exit. Even on level 5 you don't have to collect the four jewels protected by no less than nine fireflies, although it's worth trying just for fun.



K. CROWD

This screen is one of the reasons you sometimes see *Boulderdash* players staggering around clutching handfuls of their own hair. It's diabolically difficult – the large numbers of boulders, and small size of certain gaps, make it tremendously easy to get trapped. On all five levels you must collect the six jewels positioned approximately as shown. There are however six different places where falling boulders can block off the route you need to go – they're marked T1-6 (the T stands for trap!). In general you should clear as much earth as you can below these traps so that the boulders have space to fall into. When collecting jewels D and E you must be especially careful not to dislodge a boulder as just one falling is likely to block your exit.

Here's the order in which I collect the jewels on each of the five levels.

LEVEL 1: B-C-D-E-A-F. The fact that on this level two pieces of the right-hand diagonal wall are missing, means that after collecting jewel A, you can move straight up, clearing earth as you go, collect F, then get back to the exit without getting trapped.

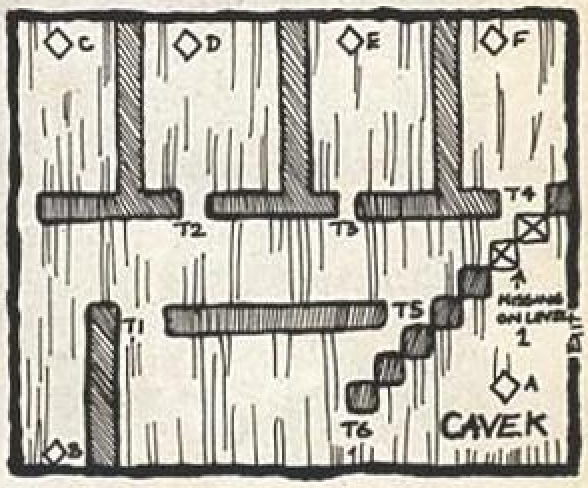
LEVEL 2: B-C-D-E-F-A. On this and higher levels it's virtually imossible to avoid getting blocked at T6 – so you have to use a firefly to blast your way through the diagonal wall.

LEVEL 3: B-C-D-A-E-F. Very easy to get blocked at T1 – clear maximum space below it and be careful how you topple the boulders piled below T2. To get the last three jewels, release the amoeba placed just right of T6 and use it to blow a hole through the diagonal wall at T5 (there are boulders positioned handily there). Then clear out the space thoroughly below the hole before collecting the last three jewels.

LEVEL 4: B-C-A-D-E-F. Jewel B appears impossible to get without getting trapped, but it isn't! Extracting it involves clearing all the earth to the right of the jewel, toppling a few boulders and then blistering down to the jewel.

After collecting jewel A you must move up and clear the earth under the diagonal wall below T4. Then make your way to jewel D by moving left ABOVE the horizontal middle wall and then up through T2. This avoids the deadly dangerous operation of having to free a completely trapped firefly below left of T2. Next free the firefly at T3, collect jewel E and use the firefly to blow through the diagonal wall at T4.

LEVEL 5. B-C-D-E-F-A. This one's riddled with fireflies which, fortunately, you can turn to your advantage. After blistering down to get B, you can use the firefly guarding jewel C to blow through the vertical wall to the right of the jewel. This allows you straight through to D, and you can then repeat the trick, using a firefly just above T2. After thus blasting through to E, you can do the same again with a third firefly below E to get straight through to F. Then go all the way back round to A which looks impossible to collect, but again, there is a way, using buttoning and blistering techniques. If you can't discover it, you'll have to use yet another firefly to blow up some boulders left of A. It's possible to complete the screen on this level with two minutes to spare!



L. WALLS

Another screen which involves plenty of blasting. On four of the levels you simply have to blast through three vertical walls near their bases, working from right to left. The exception is level 2, where you have to skip the first wall, and lead a firefly down from the top to wall 2.

A complication on some of the levels is that it's quite hard to position boulders correctly for

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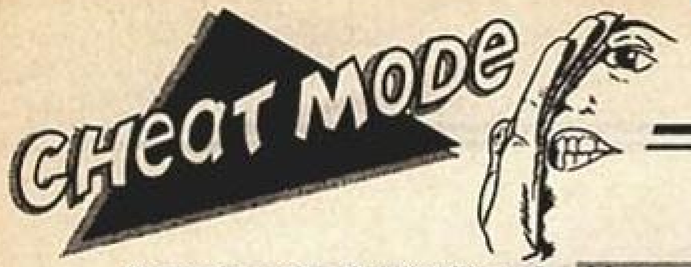


WHERE IS THAT ROCKFORD?

dropping onto the fireflies. A certain amount of boulder-pushing is required.

On one level – level 5 as I remember – there's a nasty little trap at the exit – it's all too easy to get yourself sealed off, so beware.

M. APOCALYPSE

Great fun, this one. There are numerous techniques, but for the greedy one stands out. Dig a large, vertical-sided cavern above the wall sealing off the butterflies, making sure it connects to the amoeba. Then, starting from the top left of the cavern, create a clear path down to the butterflies. Run along the bottom of the screen, allowing the butterflies to escape up the path, enter the cavern and contact the amoeba. If you wait a bit and then enter the cavern at bottom left, you should be able to reap a very rich harvest. It's not difficult to collect 150 jewels or more.

N. ZIGZAG

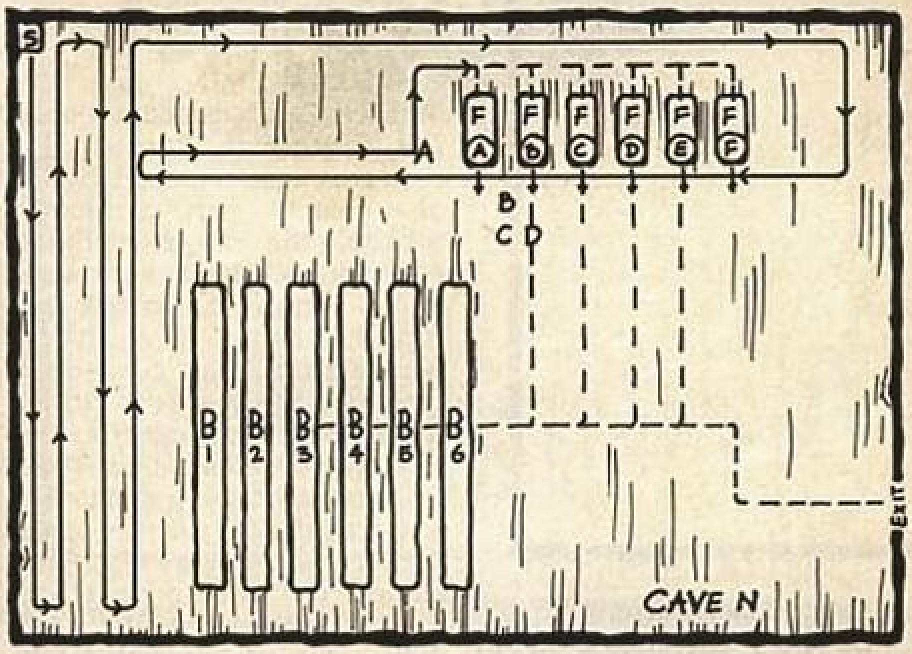
(Note, not called Zigwag as in the Mirrorsoft instruction leaflet!)

Many consider this one of the hardest screens, but the technique shown in the diagram makes it relatively easy.

You start by creating a small, diversionary maze on the left of the screen, then tunnel along the top of the cave, down, and then left underneath the six boulders causing them to fall one space. Continue until you link up with your maze, then double back to position A, and move up the position indicated in the diagram.

Now you must release all six fireflies using the buttoning technique – button down at the right moment and immediately move right two squares. Repeat six times. This is quite easy once you've got the timing right. The fireflies will rush off left, allowing you to enact your coup de grace – push boulder A to position A, thereby sealing yourself off from the fireflies!

You can now blow up butterflies one by one at your leisure. Lead B6 to boulder B, 5 to C, 4 to D and 3 to E. On level one that's enough. By level five you also need to use boulder F, thereby allowing fireflies back in and creating a hectic last few moments.



O. FUNNEL

On some levels this cave is almost impossible – I consider the funnel on level 4 to be the game's hardest screen. Conquering the cave is a matter of working out a very fast way of clearing earth inside the funnel, then getting down the bottom and clearing earth below the wall before activating it. On the higher levels there are numerous fireflies to contend with including, on level 4, one which is solidly encased in earth, yet must be freed. Just make sure you start the cave with plenty of lives!

P. ENCHANTED BOX

A matter of learning a route which will allow you to achieve all that must be done in the limited time available. On higher levels there's often a shortage of boulders above the boxes, so you may have to push or topple some into position. Hard to give specific tips beyond that – if you've reached this far, you shouldn't have too much trouble cracking this one.

Breakout from the Beach-Head

STAGE 1: Always go through the hidden passage in preference to a prolonged battle with fighters. You're bound to lose ships against the fighters but with practice you can get your ships through the passage with minimal loss.

STAGE 2: There are two sensible routes through the channel, one up each side. Both routes are relatively simple at the bottom of the screen but get tough near the top where you have to squeeze by mines and go close to the cliffs from where the torpedoes appear. This means you can chug along happily avoiding torpedoes on the bottom half of the screen. On the top you need to line yourself up and race through with your fingers crossed that a torpedo doesn't appear just as you pass.

STAGE 3: Move down as soon as you appear from the channel so as to engage the enemy fleet as close to the land as possible. Angle your guns midway between the fleet and the top of the screen so that you can shoot the incoming planes before they release their bombs. This position should also allow you to get the reconnaisance aircraft that are worth good points. If a plane gets past you leave it and concentrate on the incoming craft, because altering the elevation of your gun is time-consuming.

STAGE 4: The aircraft carrier tries to escape and should be sunk first for a massive bonus. Next take out the two distant battleships that are viewed head on at either side of the screen. These are very dangerous and can take out ships quite fast if you can't find the range. Go for the ship on the right, that also shells you, next and round off with the almost harmless rustbucket in the middle of the screen.

STAGE 5: Having got the easy bits out of the way the hard task now starts. The tank run is in pseudo 3D, but don't be fooled – if the pixels of your tank overlap anything it's bye-bye armour-plating. The gun emplacements that appear can only be learnt by experience, but the most important ones are in the middle of the screen. Once you know where to expect them position yourself and loose off a shell before they even appear on screen. They may not appear on that run but better safe than a heap of twisted burning wreckage.

The other tank is tougher because it moves up and down with you. To take him out you have to dodge inside one of his bullets and hold your course till he's hit. Then rapid evasive action is needed to avoid the shell which he will have had time to fire. The other major problem is the last gun that sometimes blocks the bridge – you have to get this early or there's no way you'll get a crack at it closer in.

STAGE 6: At Kuhn-Lin the important thing to remember is that your shells have a slight drift to the right and your turret has to be aligned one 'notch' to the left to hit a target. You should be able to hit at least two targets per tank and sometimes three. This means that once you're skilled you can land eight tanks and use all of them in destroying the fortress to get a really high score.

Airwolf

This marvellous little program from Tim Gilbert of Whitby gives you complete invulnerability in *Airwolf*. You can fly through walls, objects – anything you like. The only drawback is that you must keep to the programmed game screens or you'll get a lot of funny graphics on screen and a total crash. The program should be typed in and run (don't forget to save a copy first) and then the game loaded. There's no prompt to press play but just rewind the tape to the start and play it. The time will still run out on you but the game's now a doddle. Nice one Tim!

```
1 PEN 15
2 BORDER 14
3 MODE 0
4 OPENOUT "D":MEMORY
&3E7:CLOSEOUT
5 FOR X=0 TO 15:READ A:
INK X,A:NEXT
6 LOAD "!PROG"
7 BORDER 4
8 MODE 0
9 PAPER 9
10      POKE      &7B33,0:POKE
&7B34,0:POKE &7B35,0
11 CALL &68A8
12                         DATA
14,26,0,23,17,22,15,6,26,4,23,2,15,
26,13,0
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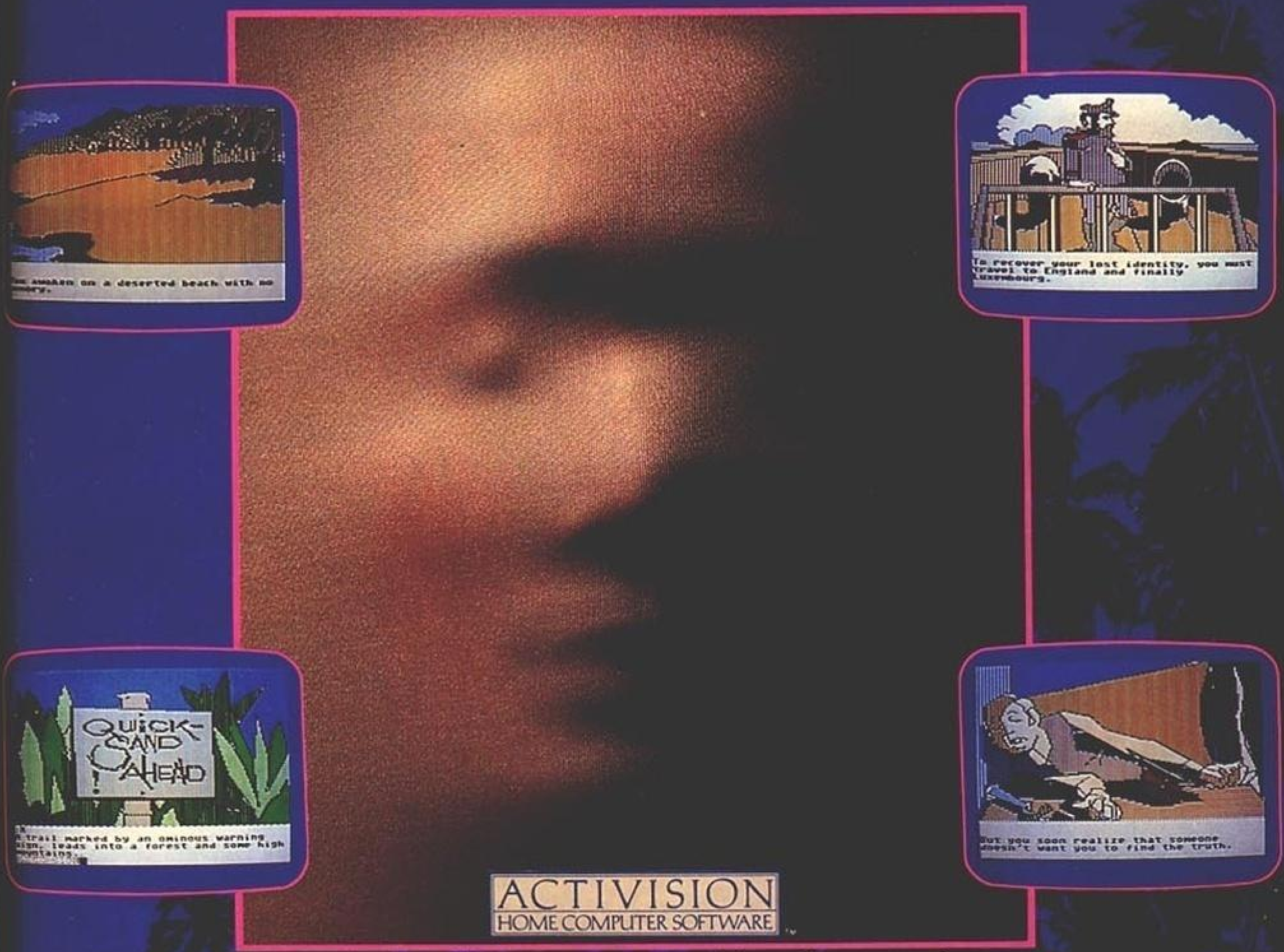

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mory.

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travel to England and finally
Luxembourg.

trail marked by an ominous warning
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ut you soon realize that someone
oesn't want you to find the truth.

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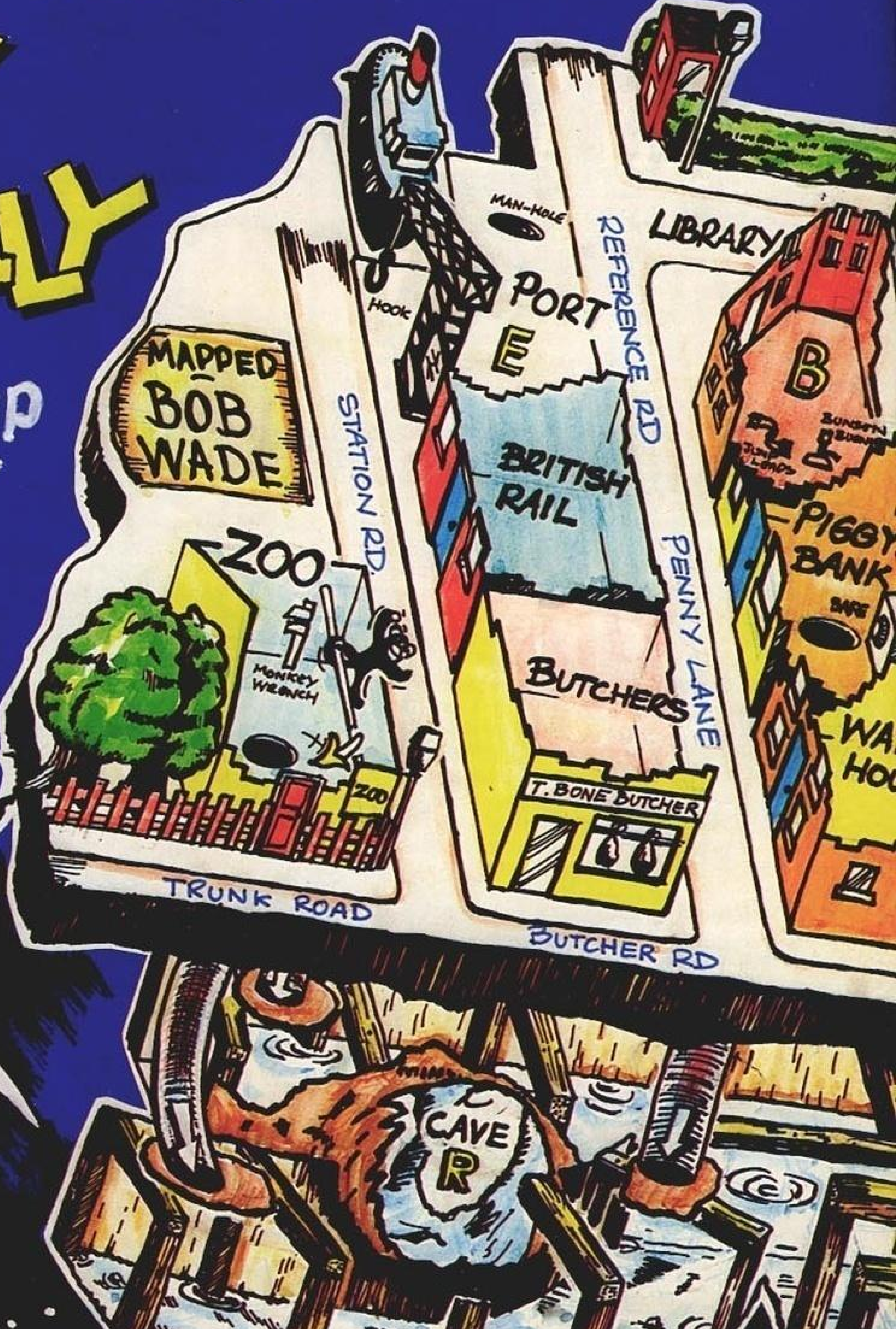
MAPPED BOB WADE
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REFERENCE RD
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B
BUNSEN BURNER
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BRITISH RAIL
PIGGY BANK
SAFE
ZOO
MONKEY WRENCH
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PENNY LANE
BUTCHERS
T. BONE BUTCHER
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BUTCHER RD
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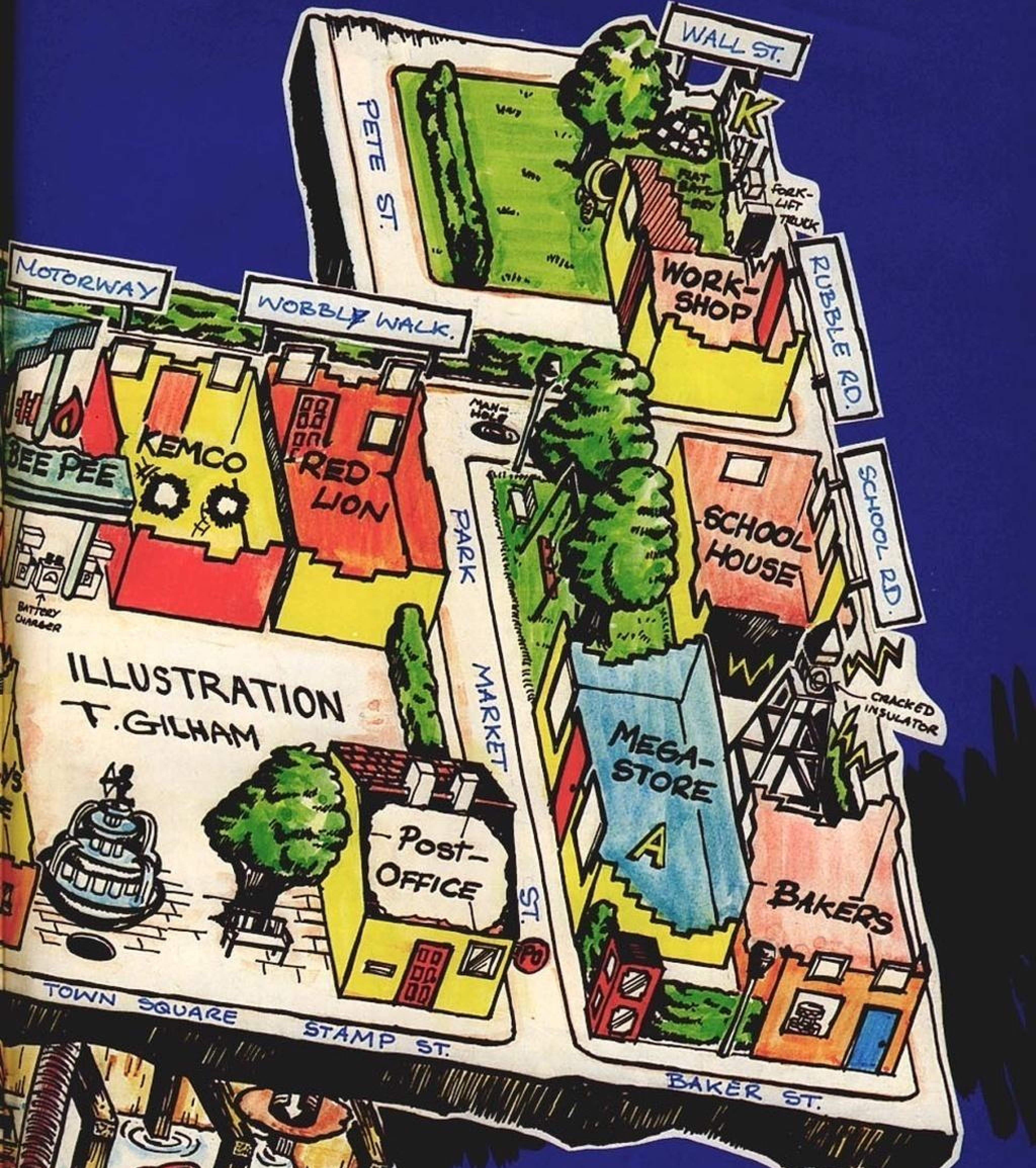
WALL ST.
PETE ST.
K
FLAT BATT-ERY
FORK-LIFT TRUCK
WORK-SHOP
RUBBLE RD.
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MAN-HOLE
BEE PEE
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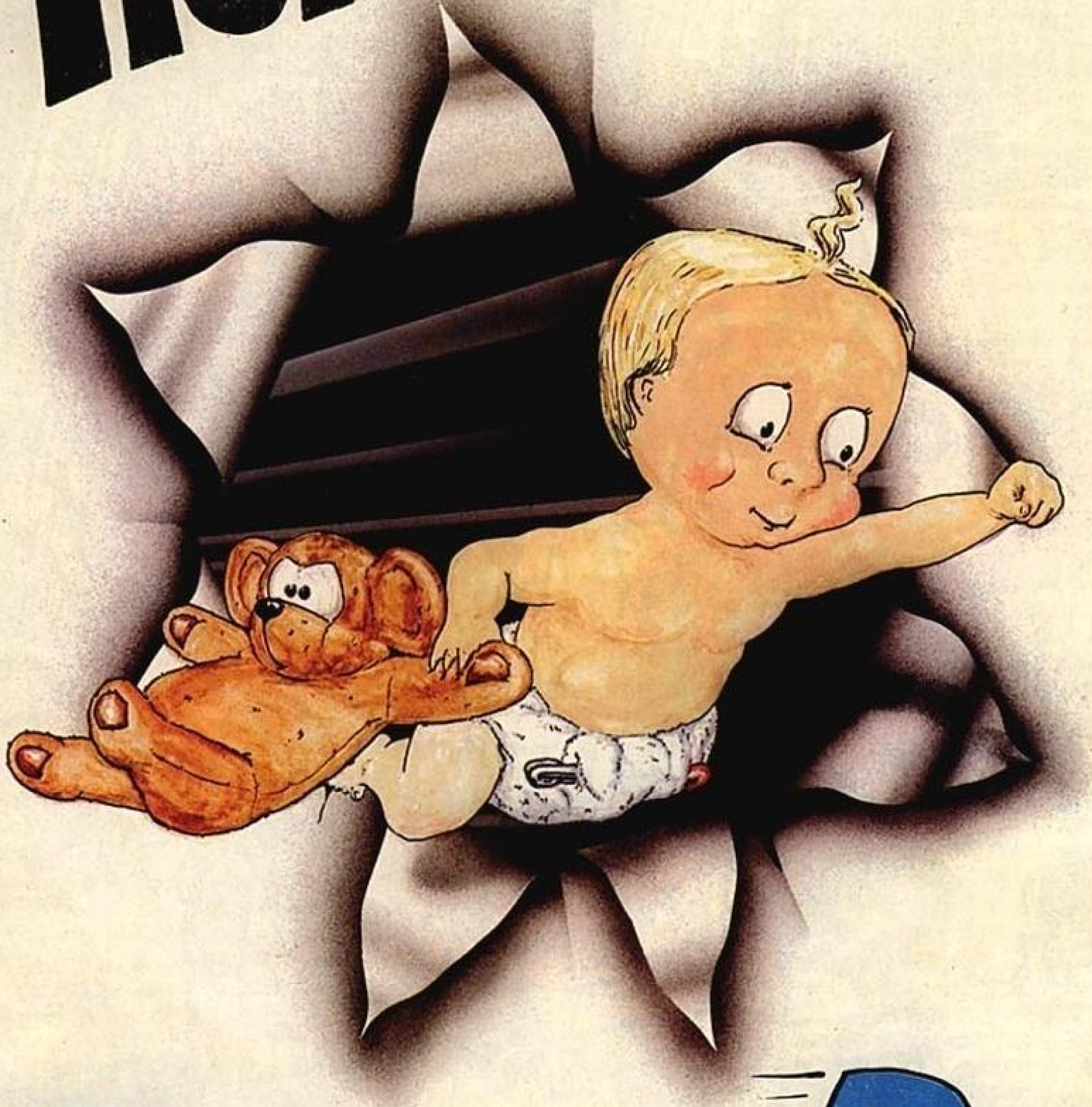

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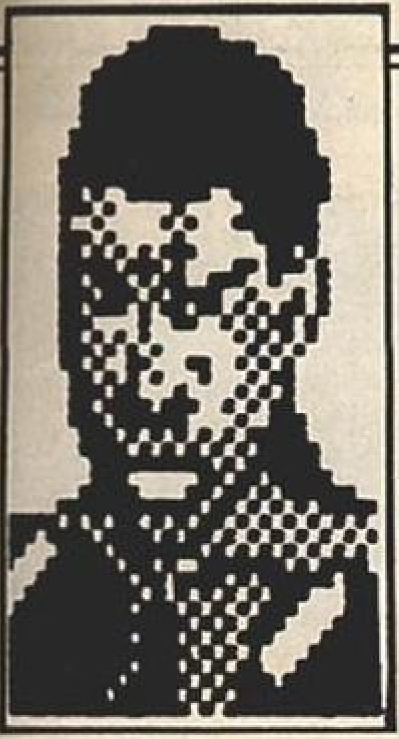
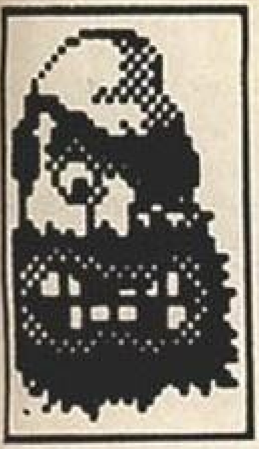
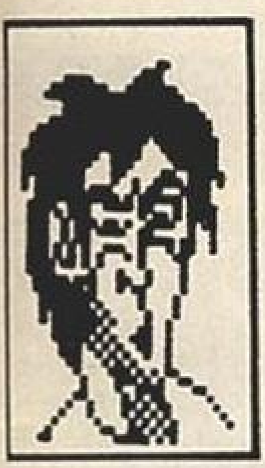


PUNCH POWER

If those nasty foreigners in *Frank Bruno's Boxing* are getting you down – on the canvas that is – then here are some handy tips and a few code numbers that should help you put out their lights. The numbers were entered with the name Bob and unfortunately he hasn't been fit enough or fast enough to face Peter Perfect yet.



CANADIAN CRUSHER
Alternate punches to his head and body as he moves his guard to defend himself. If you make KO strength just keep letting him have it – he's got no answer. Watch out once you've knocked him down because he comes straight up with a bearhug that you'll have to duck.



FLING LONG CHOP – ON5IOF5O7
This guy is fast but not very effective. Just keep throwing every sort of punch at him until reaching KO strength or until you down him three times. Watch out for the killer attack again – his kick. Prior to unleashing this he crouches down, at which point you should duck – fast!

Wally Clues

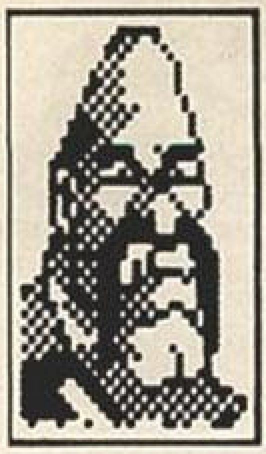
Giving the entire game away on Mikrogen's *Everyone's a Wally* would spoil all the fun, wouldn't it? So we're not going to do that. But what we will do is give a few clues to help out those for whom our mega-map isn't enough. Thanks to Scotsman David Baxter for his help.

FIXING THE FOUNTAIN.
Now listen here, Dick. You've just got to take the plunge at the Post Office. Scared? Then why not calm down by going to the zoo with a packet of monkey nuts. After you've wrenched yourself away from there, a visit to the park could be most refreshing.

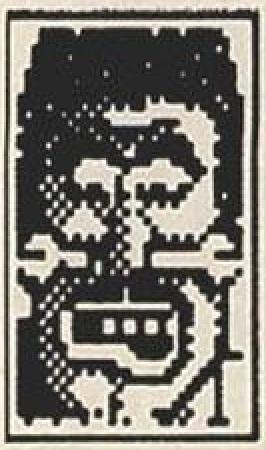
MENDING THE PYLON
This one's for you, Harry boy. Why not prepare with a nice long game of asteroids. Then to send the sparks flying all you need is a bit of insulation and a certain important tool. Now you can go up in the world.

FIXING THE FUSE
Another mini-task for the resident electrician. All it needs is some fusewire.

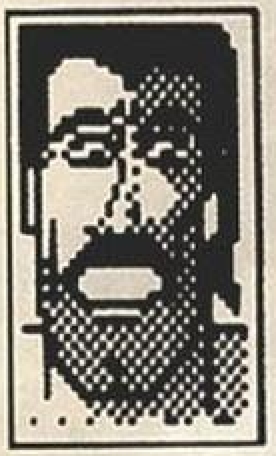
HOW TO BUILD A WALL
Come on you Wally, get a bucket and sand. No you're not off to the beach, but you do want to fill that bucket with water – hmm, wonder how to get some. Now where could you mix some water and sand? And once you've mixed it, what tool could you use to slap down that cement? Find it and take a walk down Wall St.



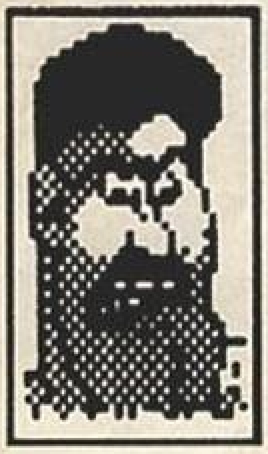
ANDREI PUNCHEREDOV
OH9IOC3B7
Not a lot to this Russian giant. Keep throwing rights to his head and you'll soon have KO strength to take him out with.



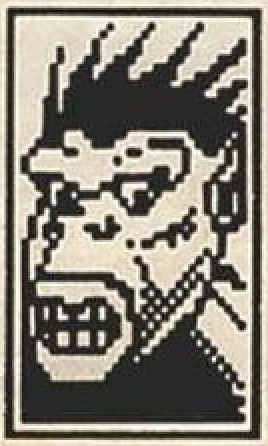
TRIBAL TROUBLE – CL3IOCBFB
Always keep your guard down as he never goes for your head. When he raises his guard let him have it in the gut with the left. You probably won't manage to get a KO punch but he can be put out well within the three minutes.



FRENCHIE – LF7INM9A8
Our friend from over the channel is susceptible to lefts to the head – you can even get a KO punch against him. He's got a nasty weapon in the windmill punch though. This is unpredictable but when he starts winding it up wait for the arm to pause and then duck as fast as possible. It wastes time while you wait for him tc throw it but it's safer.



RAVIOLI MAFIOSI – OIAIOO7A7
This guy is really tough and there are several punches needed to take him out as well as one to watch out for. There are two methods for dealing with him. Rights to the head plus a left when he drops his right hand. As an alternative, or addition, body punching provides an interesing sight when you hit him and leaves him unable to do much except guard his midriff. His 'come on' action of opening his guard and moving gloves up and down can be fatal but if you hit him when his gloves are up you can stop the threat.



ANTIPODEAN ANDY
AM4INC59B
This guy is really nasty. His only weakness is if you can hit him with a right to the head. The problem is that he has excellent defences and throws a devastating double fisted punch that you have to be quick to duck. He throws this punch very frequently and you could get very frustrated with hitting the canvas.

That's as far as this reviewer got but S.L. Thompson of Solihull

can do even better. Here are his tips and codes for dealing with Peter Perfect.

PETER PERFECT – FDQIILK16
Hit him twice to the head with the left, then twice with the right. Watch his face when you knock him down. He blows kisses to the crowd so that you can't hit him bu' keep punching and you'll hit hirr when he finishes.
PETER PERFECT again – OEQIIBNB6
He's better this time.

£300 REWARD

It's still up for grabs. The loot, that is. The bounty for the people who send in the best tips, maps and pokes before Christmas. Anything you can do better than anyone else is likely to give you a good chance of collecting one of the three prizes of £100. Don't be a shrinking violet – let everyone know what a whiz you are. So send in your tips, pokes and maps to: *Cheat Mode, Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.*

Be a Karate Smarty

If you're suffering from violent stomach pains, an aching head and severe bruising all over your body – fear not. Our resident medic Dr. Bob Wadecan give you a run down on how and when to use all the moves in *Way of the Exploding Fist.*

ROB'S ON MY PAGE!

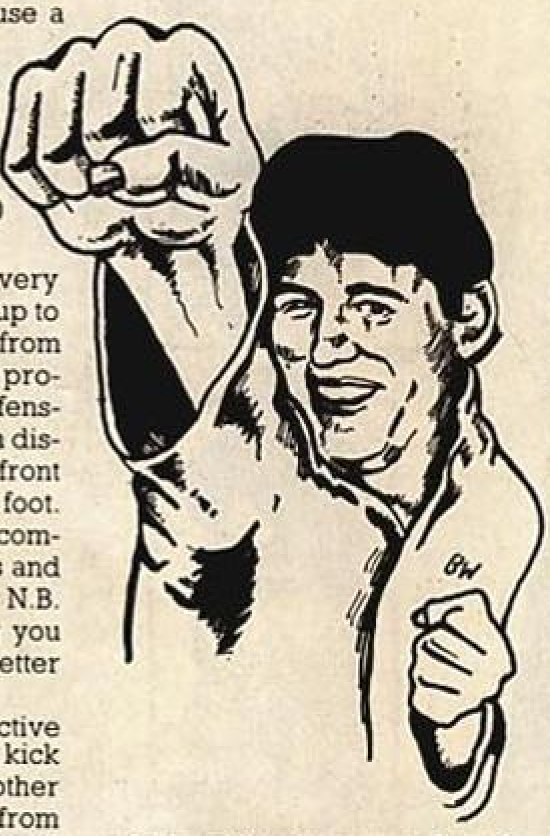
GET OFF!

The first thing to remember is that it's essential to finish your opponent off quickly and not worry too much about whether you use a high scoring blow. This is because you may get caught out trying a complicated manoeuvre when a simple fast one could provide over 2,000 bonus time points.

FORWARD SWEEP: this is a very useful move in early bouts (up to 2nd Dan). It can be executed from the crouch position, thereby protecting you against many offensive blows. Can be used from distance on your opponent's front foot or closer in on his back foot. Still of use in later bouts but computer responds with attacks and evasive action of his own. N.B. Quite a slow move leaving you vulnerable against better fighters.

MID-KICK: another effective move early on, delivering a kick to the midriff. This is another move where your distance from the red fighter is not that crucial and the early opponents aren't fast enough to respond to it. More skilled men often reply with a faster attack, resulting in a simultaneous knock-down or you being beaten. Like the forward sweep it should be used sparingly in later bouts.

FLYING KICK: this is a spectacular, high-scoring and effective move that brings dividends at all levels. It can be performed at some distance from your opponent and when sucessful gives many points. It can be blocked, though, and this may leave you close in and vulnerable. In this situation you'll have to be ready with a quick punch. If your opponent tries one of these respond quickly with your own and catch him with his guard down.



HIGH, JAB, LOW PUNCHES: these are used close in and are very effective but leave you wide open to a counter. If another move has taken you in close a quick jerk on the joystick will effect a high or jab kick. This is useful for advanced combat and can be practiced on the early fighters by just walking up and letting them have it. The low punch is executed from the crouch position, providing a surprise variant if you've been using the forward sweep a lot. After getting in close don't try to walk or somersault away but instead continue forward and turn round – it's much safer.

FORWARD SOMERSAULT, HIGH BACK-KICK: these two should be considered together since they combine to make a very stylish attack. When you're in mid-kick range of the enemy, forward somersault so that you're standing behind him, then just let him have a back-kick. This should be performed as all one move and when you judge the distances right looks great.

BACKWARD SWEEP: this is an alternative for use after a forward somersault and requires you to be less accurate than a high back-kick. It's also much safer because you are less vulnerable to attack.

ROUNDHOUSE: very spectacular and a good scorer but requires very accurate positioning. It can be used both in front of and behind and opponent but you have to be in exactly the right place to catch the side of his head with your foot. Defensively this is a good move as well since most of your body is out of the way of an attack while performing it.

SHORT JAB KICK: this is a real beauty for catching the computer in the middle of a move. It is very fast and so if the reflexes are sharp enough you can whip in a quick kick, crumpling him in mid-move.

BACKWARD SOMERSAULT: can be used to retreat some distance but later opponents are good at catching you in mid-flip, crashing you to the ground.

BLOCKS: these can be handy for stopping an attack but beware since holding a block can leave you wide open. It also may take a crucial split second to drop a block and move or attack yourself.

CROUCH: valuable position for sweeping and low punching from but watch out for attacks when you rise from the position. You're fairly safe (not totally) while crouched but on the way to a standing position you're a sitting duck.

BEAT BLAGGER

Blagger from Alligata/Amsoft features a demo mode which shows all the screens. G.Upton from Telford told us how to get into them. As the screens go by press A,D,G,J and L keys simultaneously followed by enter to start the game and, hey presto!, you start on that demo screen. Now you can play all the screens without completing the others.

High Score Names

G.Upton also sent some words to type into high score tables. Try "Dark Star" on the *Dark Star* score table from Design Design and "Hugh" on the *Sorcery* table. For *Dark Star* and *Tankbusters* there are several other words that prompt responses so why not see if your minds are as weird as the guys at Design Design and experiment a little.

Starion Codes

Andrew Watts of Wolverhampton lets us in on the *Starion* code words for grid one, zone one and where to drop them off.

BIBLE goes to zone 9
STARION to zone 3
ELECTRICITY to zone 8
RELATIVITY to zone 2
EEC to zone 7
DIAMOND to zone 6
RHODESIA to zone 4
TELEGRAM to zone 1
ASPIRIN to zone 5

These combine to make the password REDBREAST.

COMPETITION

THE PSS DYNAMIC DUO

Roll over for a bumper bonus prize

Mein Gottlieb! I almost tilted when I saw this one. You could've knocked me down with a flipper etc. etc. I've never seen anything like it. Not for a while anyway. Imagine – with a little help from PSS we're awarding 50 copies of not just one, but two, ace games.

The Covenant is a 256-room arcade adventure that features unusually attractive graphics and tons of tricky puzzles as you try to stun a host of animals and then repopulate your planet.

Macadam Bumper is the one and only pinball simulation and construction set available on the Amstrad. It's a French import, but none the worse for that. In fact, it's *fantastique*. If you win a copy here you'll have a chance to win a real pinball table – PSS are offering one for the best table design created on the game.

So if you want to get your mitts on those flippers and save a dying planet, get a load of the questions below. But first read the reviews, because otherwise you won't have a clue.

1. What do you need to stun animals in *The Covenant*?
a. A key
b. An anaesthetic
c. A hammer
2. How many of each type of animal are there in each section?
a. 3
b. 4
c 34

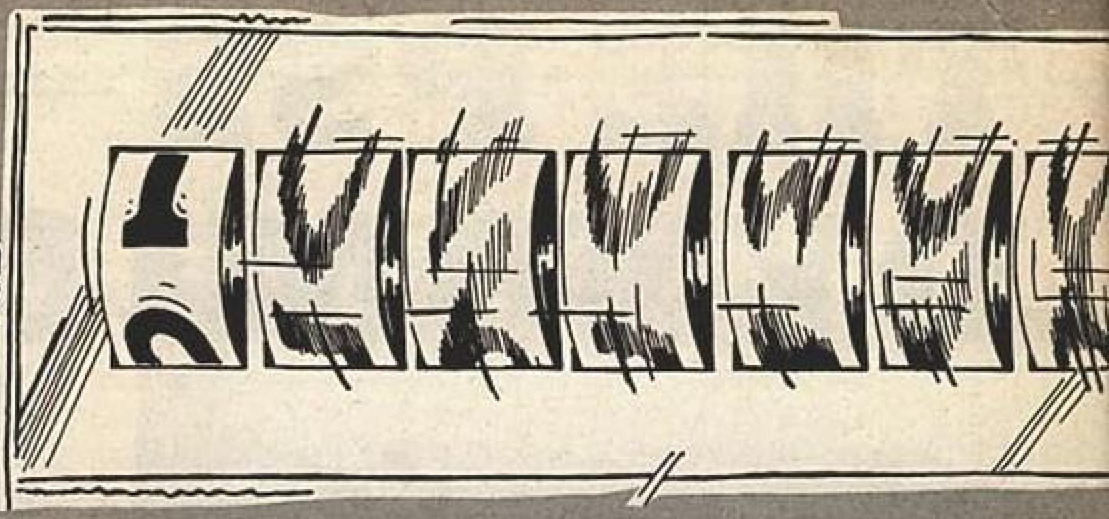
3. How do you earn special bonuses in Macadam Bumper?
a. Score 50000 points
b. Knock down all targets
c. Insert another 10p
4. How many balls does each player get?
a. 4
b. 5
c. Unlimited

FREE POSTER OFFER...
SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS
The Covenant
ARCADE
PSS
Macadam Bumper
THE PINBALL CONSTRUCTION KIT
COMPETITION WIN A PIN BALL MACHINE DETAILS INSIDE

Just write the number of the question with the alternative you think is correct, e.g. 1a, on a postcard or the back of an envelope and send it to: *PSS Competition, Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.*
The closing date for entries is November 15th.

http://www.oldgamesitalia.net/ http://www.oldgamesitalia.net/

Hi SCORE



Android One
17,680 David Litherland, Bolton.

Beach Head
110,957 Ralph Turner, Newport.
108,400 Bob Wade, Somerton.
103,800 Kevin Davies, Mold.

Blagger
14,325 Ian Grainger, Wingate.

Boulderdash
6,000 (2A-2K) Steve Barnes, High Wycombe.
2,597 (1A-1F) R.Collinson, Hull.

Brian Jacks Superstar Challenge
1,706 Bob Wade, Somerton.
783 Mark Mamone, Peterborough.

Chiller
6,400 Simon Dean, Rutland.

Chuckie Egg
252,100 Christopher Hardy, Weymouth.
250,300 Ian Dunn, Cannock.
104,000 J.Shaw, Havant.

Combat Lynx
27,400 S.Wardhaugh, Northallerton.

Confuzion
18,040 John Gigney, Chelmsford.

Daley Thompson's Decathlon
1,711,600 Mat Brown, Exeter.
425,500 Simon West, Northwich.
400,000 Frederick Perlin, Buton-on-Trent.
400,000 Colin Broad, Oldham.

Defend or Die
2,099,250 P.A.Hyett, Cheltenham.
347,500 Paul Edwards, Stevenage.
109,000 Chris Wales, Wakefield.

Electro Freddy
1,525 Lee Gatiss, Margate.
1,110 Mark Schofield, Uckfield.

Everyone's a Wally
1,570 Antony Critchley, Bracknell.

Fruit Machine
£9.60 Paul Berrecloth, Cardiff.

Fruity Frank
54,090 Robert Shepherd, Sutton-on-Sea.
6,950 Andrew Cleminson, Doncaster.
6,310 Ben Leamy, Upminster.

Ghostbusters
208,400 Gary Sutherland, York.
84,100 Neil Macdonald, Bromsgrove.
65,300 Mark Burns, Tetford.

Grand Prix Rally II
32,200 Ian Ridley, Blundellsands.

Harrier Attack
505,750 Ian Cousins, Winchester.
368,000 Simon West, Northwich.
225,100 Harpal Kooner, Birmingham.

Hunchback
1,000,000 Kevin McKeown Jnr, Armadale.
180,150 Matthew Chester, Louth.

Jet Set Willy
125 items Harpal Kooner, Birmingham.

Killer Gorilla
131,000 Ian Dunn, Cannock.
100,900 Ian Ridley, Blundellsands.

Knight Lore
82% (14 charms) Martin Luise, Solihull.

Kong Strikes Back
44,900 John Gigney, Chelmsford.

Laserwarp
36,500 Jonathan Newcombe, St.Albans.

Oh Mummy
3,260 Frank Perkins, North Leeds.
920 Sanjeev Patel, Loughborough.

On the Run
60,000 Ranjit Singh, Queen's Park.

Pyjamarama
99% P.Wilson, Dunfermline.
92% Mat Brown, Exeter.
92% Michael Ross, Seaford.

Raid
229,250 Bob Wade, Somerton.

Red Arrows
65,416 S.Glendenning, Darlington.

Rocky Horror Show
12 pieces Jason Bloomfield, Ipswich.
9 pieces Amanda Grieve, Houghton Regis.

Roland in Space
34 pieces Jason Bloomfield, Ipswich.

Roland in Time
86 crystals Matthew Paine, Wymondham.

Roland on the Ropes
75,900 Brad Howarth, Bristol.
72,000 Michael Toone, Derby.
58,200 Richard Swan, Margate.

Sorcery
97,949 Ralph Turner, Newport.
97,000 Simon Dean, Rutland.
96,400 Antony Critchley, Bracknell.

3D Starstrike
1,650,300 Mark Burns, Tetford.
1,500,000 Ian Dunn, Cannock.
1,424,050 Robert Shepherd, Sutton-on-Sea.

Super Pipeline II
260,325 Amanda Grieve, Houghton Regis.
45,340 Lee Gatiss, Margate.

The Way of the Exploding Fist
662,300 (10th Dan) G.D.Holloway, Brockley.
510,160 (9th Dan) Mat Brown, Exeter.
220,000 (7th Dan) Mark Mamone, Peterborough.

The first national Amstrad high-score table

So, here it is, the first ever collection of high scores achieved on Amstrad games by Amstrad owners. Now you know what to aim for to be among the nation's best games players. Many thanks to everyone who sent in a score – this table only includes scores sent in before September 21st, so if you think yours should have been included but isn't, look out for next month's issue.

In the meantime, get a-playing...

How you can take part

If you're unimpressed by some of these scores, don't just sit there – send us yours.

If you are impressed by some of them, why not get to work on bettering them? All it takes is practice.

If you're so impressed by a score you think it's impossible, you can actually challenge it using the relevant section of the form below. We've introduced this feature, unique among high score pages, to try to keep a check on the very tiny minority of players who don't mind exagerrating just to see their name in print.

All serious challenges we receive we will print, shifting the onus of proof back onto the person who originally claimed the score. Could lead to a few lively debates, but it's all good fun, isn't it.

To qualify for printing, a challenger must give a clear reason why he thinks a score is impossible – and don't forget, a successful challenge will bring you just as much prestige as being champion scorer on a game. Police this page!

THE ALL IN-ONE ACTION ENTRY FORM

Fill in as much of the form as you wish. Then cut out the ENTIRE form (even if you've only filled in parts of it) and post it to: **Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.**

IMPORTANT
Don't forget to fill in this bit!
Name ____________________
Age ____________________
Address ____________________
____
Telephone number ____________________

High-score challenge

I hereby challenge the following high scores printed in Amstrad Action:

	GAME	SCORE
1.		
2.		

I think the score(s) impossible because:

High-score entry

I would like to register my high-scores in the following Amstrad games:

	GAME	SCORE	TIME TAKEN	
1.				
2.				
3.				

I promise these are genuine scores achieved without using cheat methods

SPECIAL OFFER

COMPLETE COMMUNICATIONS PACKAGE! £129.95

Modem2000
THORN EMI Datatech

All you need to hook into the exciting new Amstrad database

So...you want to get your Amstrad on-line? Here's a brilliant way of doing it. We're offering Amstrad Action readers an exciting communications package which contains everything you need to link up Arnold to the outside world.

It consists of:

- ▶ The Skywave Software multi-port interface – our reviewers concluded it was the most powerful telecommunications interface available for the machine.
- ▶ A Datatech VX 540 (Thorn-EMI) Modem 2000 – connects your machine to the telephone system allowing you to access massive databases such as Prestel which includes a new section specially for Amstrad owners.
- ▶ All connecting leads and documentation.
- ▶ A £10 voucher for your first quarter's subscription to Prestel micro-computing. (All you need pay is the £6.50 fee for general Prestel use.)

This package is especially suitable for anyone wanting to hook up to the new Amstrad database being launched on Prestel micro-computing by Viewfax and Micronet. The Skywave interface is currently the ONLY one approved for use with this database and capable of down-loading the free software on offer. Bought separately the interface costs £99.95, so it's definitely worth buying it as part of a package. (The modem and other items bought separately would cost at least another £60).

In addition to accessing Prestel, you can use the modem to communicate with the growing number of private bulletin boards which operate on 1200/75 baud. This is fast becoming the national standard. However some smaller bulletin boards still work on 300 baud, and you should note that the modem in our package is not able to access these. It is however a British Telecom approved modem which has proved reliable and easy to use. It is NOT an acoustic modem – it plugs directly into a standard BT phone socket, and contains a similar socket into which you plug your telephone for dialling through to the database of your choice. This arrangement ensures more reliable transfer of data than an acoustic modem which simply listens to the noise coming out of your telephone ear-piece.

The package will be sent to you direct from Exeter-based Modem House, one of the country's largest suppliers of modems. Meanwhile if you want to get on with applying for a subscription to Prestel microcomputing so that you can get on-line as soon as your modem arrives, why not send for an application form from: Micronet 800, Durrant House, 8 Herbal Hill, London EC1R 5EJ.

And if your modem arrives before you've joined Prestel you could always try dialling some of the following free 1200/75 bulletin board numbers: 0224-641585, 0734-786568, 01-863-0198, 01-341-7840, 01-609-3931, 0626-890014, 0493-781334, 0268-778953 0272-421196, 0602-289783, 0277-228867, 0936-77025, 0224-641066, 061-736-8449, 01-941-4285, 01-346-7150, 01-740-5017, 01-888-8894, 01-679-6183, 0492-49194, 01-631-3076, 01-606-4194, 0392-53116, 0734-78568, 0268-22177,

Only one question remains – can you resist the lure of the hacking bug?

Communications Package offer form

Yes please, I would like to order the complete communications package as outlined on this page.

My computer is (please circle one): CPC-464 CPC-664 CPC-6128

I enclose a cheque for £129.95 made payable to Future Publishing.

Game chart voting form

I would like to vote for the following game(s):

GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	NO. OF VOTES
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Total number of votes = 10

Serious software voting form

I would like to vote for the following piece(s) of 'serious software':

PROGRAM	SOFTWARE HOUSE	NO. OF VOTES
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Tota

HOT STUFF

AMSTRAD ACTION READERS' CHARTS!

Votes have been flooding in for both the games and serious software charts and the top programs in both have come as no surprise at all. The top two games are *Sorcery (+)* and *The Way of the Exploding Fist*, the two monster sellers on the Amstrad, way ahead of the rest.

We lumped the two versions of *Sorcery* together because one is just an extension of the other. The chart will come as no surprise to Paula Byrne of Melbourne House who told us that *Fist* was the "best selling game on the Amstrad ever" surpassing even *Sorcery*.

Ultimate rolled in at numbers three and four with their blockbusters and the classic *Dun Darach* from Gargoyle at number five. After that there wasn't much between the games, as you can see from the percentage of the total vote they each got, but all the big names are there and from your enthusiastic reaction to them likely to remain so.

My feeling is there will be a new number one next month and plenty of big new games threatening to score well. Ocean, US Gold, Amsoft and others all have stunning new games out to capture the Christmas market and as you can see from this month's reviews it should be a bumper Christmas for amazing Amstrad games software.

The serious software chart had a runaway victor in *Mini Office* which offers astounding value for money. Also well up were *Screen Designer* and *Tasword*. There are lots of different utilities and serious programs in the ten, showing the wide range of software that Arnold users enjoy using.

Word processors, art programs, compilers, databases and assemblers all appear in the top ten making a terrific spread of interest. The response to both charts shows that Amstrad users like to give their machines a real workout both with games and serious software.

GAMES TOP 20

1. **Sorcery/Sorcery +**
Virgin/Amsoft (14.8%)

2. **The Way of the Exploding Fist**
Melbourne House (14.1%)

3. **Knight Lore**
Ultimate (7.8%)

4. **Alien 8**
Ultimate (5.3%)

5. **Dun Darach**
Gargoyle (4.0%)

6. **Boulder Dash**
Mirrorsoft (2.5%)

7. **Frank Bruno's Boxing**
Elite (2.4%)

8. **Beach-Head**
US Gold (2.4%)

9. **Daley Thompson's Decathlon**
Ocean (2.1%)

10. **Starion**
Melbourne House (2.0%)

11. **Jet Set Willy**
Software Projects (2.0%)

12. **Dark Star**
Design Design (1.6%)

13. **3D Star Strike**
Realtime (1.5%)

14. **Fighter Pilot**
Digital Integration (1.5%)

15. **Nonterraqueous**
Mastertroinc (1.5%)

16. **Everyone's a Wally**
Mikro-Gen (1.3%)

18. **Fruity Frank**
Kuma (1.2%)

19. **Chuckie Egg**
A&F (1.2%)

20. **Football Manager**
Addictive Games (1.1%)

SERIOUS SOFTWARE TOP 10

1. **Mini Office**
Database (21.2%)

2. **Tasword/Amsword**
Tasman/Amsoft (14.6%)

3. **Screen Designer**
Amsoft (14.2%)

4. **Masterfile**
Campbell Software (5.3%)

5. **Transmat**
Pride Utilities (4.6%)

6. **Maxam**
Arnor (3.8%)

7. **HiSoft C**
Hisoft (3.5%)

8. **Artwork**
Kuma (3.0%)

9. **Easi-Amsword**
Amsoft (2.8%)

10. **Electric Studio Light Pen**
Electric Studio (1.9%)

LOOK!

Don't be a wally voter!

Some people voting for programs last month didn't quite seem to understand the small print of our state-of-the-art voting system. So here goes with another explanation.

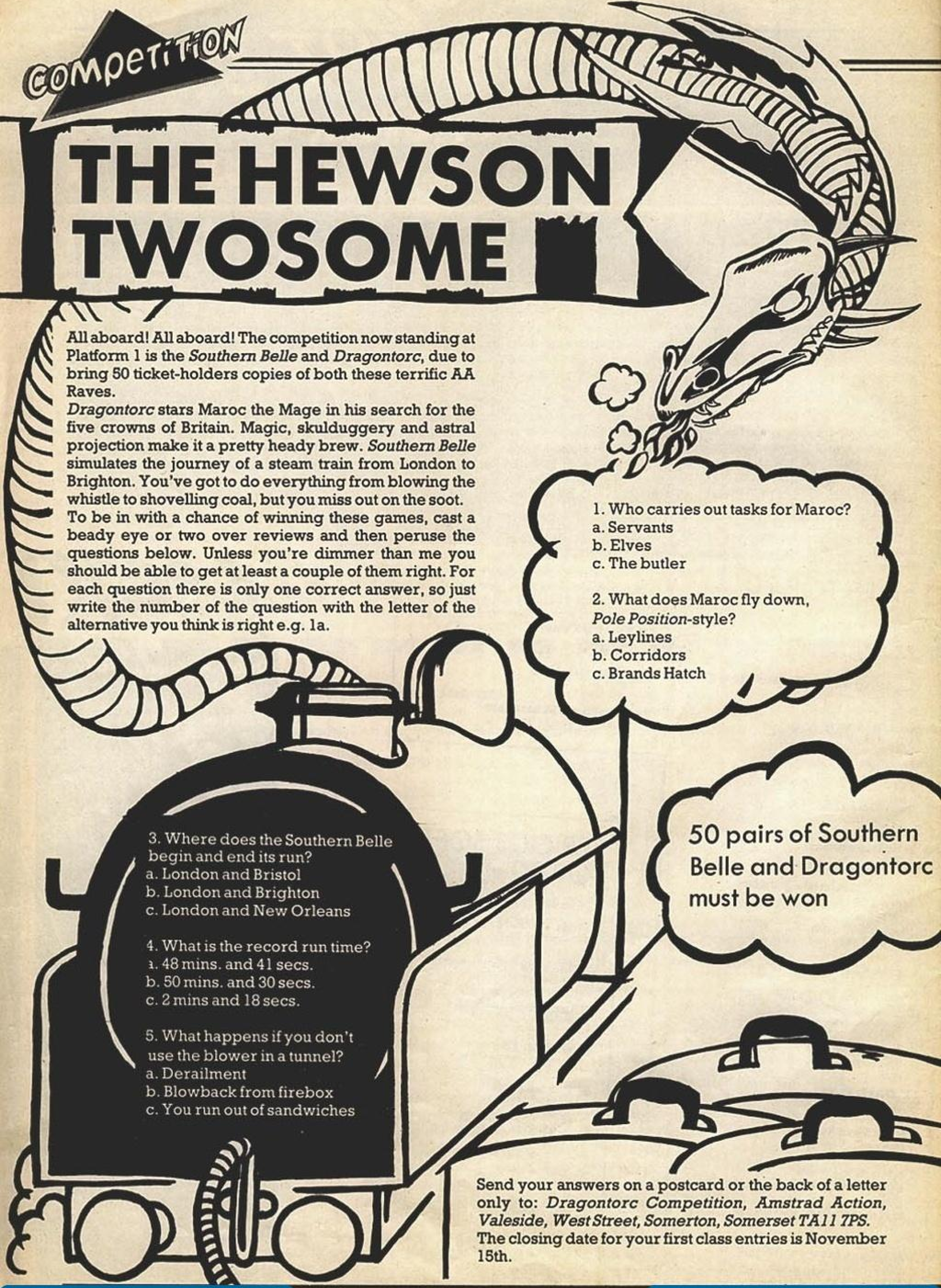
You have at your disposal a TOTAL of 10 votes for each chart. These can be split any way you like on up to five different titles, but the number of votes you give to the different titles must add up to 10.

So for example on the games chart you could give all 10 votes to a single game. Or you could give 5 votes to one game, 2 to another, and 1 each to three others. Or you could give 2 votes each to five separate games. You just have to allocate your ten votes to reflect your preferences as accurately as possible. What you CAN'T do is vote for five different games giving each of them 7 or 8 votes. That's greedy.

Another thing you can't do is send in a photo-copy of the voting form this could lead to organised attempts to hype particular titles. For example, this last month we were amused to receive a considerable number of forms all apparently copied on the same photo-copier and all, by an astonishing coincidence, giving 10 votes to a certain (very worthy) assembler program. Nice try, chaps.

COMPETITION

THE HEWSON TWOSOME



All aboard! All aboard! The competition now standing at Platform 1 is the *Southern Belle* and *Dragontorc*, due to bring 50 ticket-holders copies of both these terrific AA Raves.

Dragontorc stars Maroc the Mage in his search for the five crowns of Britain. Magic, skulduggery and astral projection make it a pretty heady brew. *Southern Belle* simulates the journey of a steam train from London to Brighton. You've got to do everything from blowing the whistle to shovelling coal, but you miss out on the soot.

To be in with a chance of winning these games, cast a beady eye or two over reviews and then peruse the questions below. Unless you're dimmer than me you should be able to get at least a couple of them right. For each question there is only one correct answer, so just write the number of the question with the letter of the alternative you think is right e.g. 1a.

1. Who carries out tasks for Maroc?
a. Servants
b. Elves
c. The butler

2. What does Maroc fly down, *Pole Position*-style?
a. Leylines
b. Corridors
c. Brands Hatch

3. Where does the Southern Belle begin and end its run?
a. London and Bristol
b. London and Brighton
c. London and New Orleans

4. What is the record run time?
a. 48 mins. and 41 secs.
b. 50 mins. and 30 secs.
c. 2 mins and 18 secs.

5. What happens if you don't use the blower in a tunnel?
a. Derailment
b. Blowback from firebox
c. You run out of sandwiches

50 pairs of Southern Belle and Dragontorc must be won

Send your answers on a postcard or the back of a letter only to: *Dragontorc Competition, Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.* The closing date for your first class entries is November 15th.

http://www.oldgamesitalia.net/ http://www.oldgamesitalia.net/

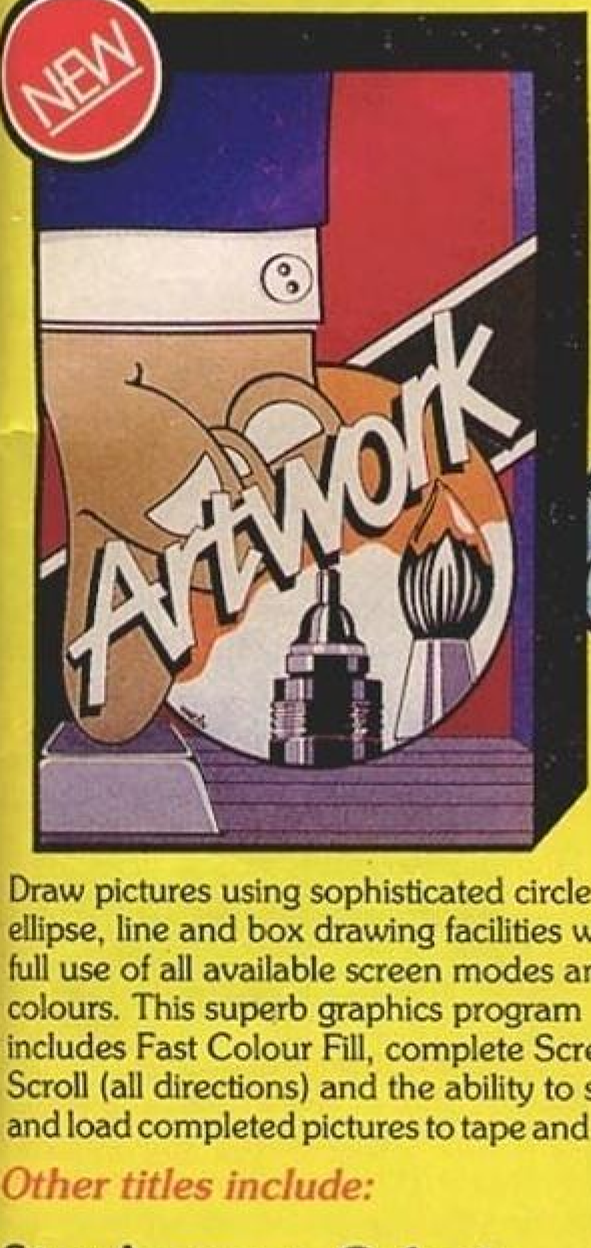
the first choice

Kuma

AMSTRAD CPC464

software

A rapidly expanding range of Entertainments and Application Software for the Amstrad CPC 464 micro-computer featuring:



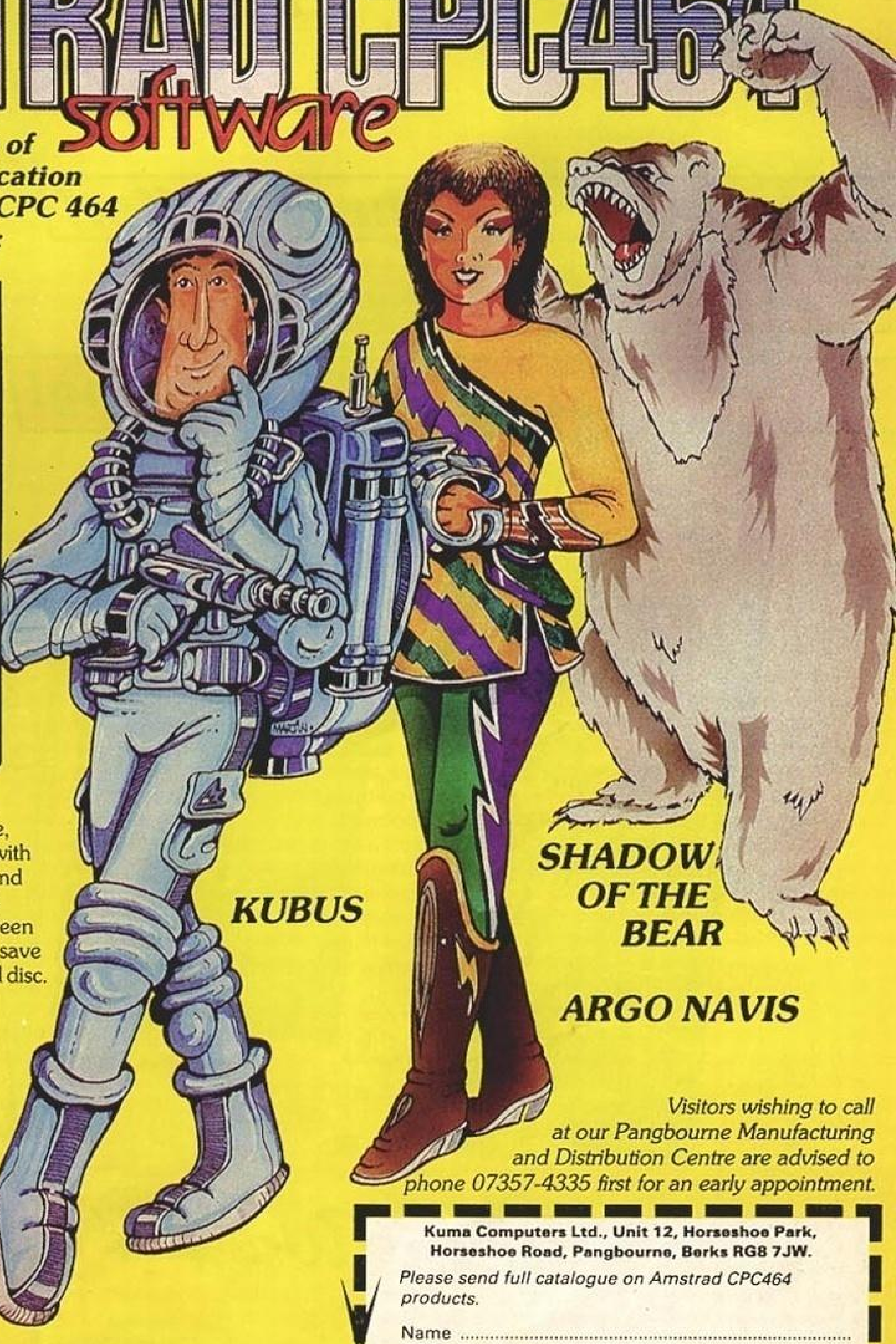
Draw pictures using sophisticated circle, ellipse, line and box drawing facilities with full use of all available screen modes and colours. This superb graphics program includes Fast Colour Fill, complete Screen Scroll (all directions) and the ability to save and load completed pictures to tape and disc.

Other titles include:

Star Avenger, Galaxia, Fruity Frank, Zen Assembler, Music Maestro, Rock Raid, North Sea Bullion, Stock Control, Datafile II.

Books:

- ***THE AMSTRAD CPC 464 EXPLORED*** *by John Braga*
- ***ZEN AND THE AMSTRAD CPC 464*** *by Ian R. Sinclair*



KUBUS

SHADOW OF THE BEAR

ARGO NAVIS

Visitors wishing to call at our Pangbourne Manufacturing and Distribution Centre are advised to phone 07357-4335 first for an early appointment.

Kuma Computers Ltd., Unit 12, Horseshoe Park,
Horseshoe Road, Pangbourne, Berks RG8 7JW.

Please send full catalogue on Amstrad CPC464 products.

Name ....
Address ....
....
.... Phone..............

I own an Amstrad CPC 464 computer ☐

Trade

TWO OCEAN/ IMAGINE GAMES FREE!

What an offer!

Unbelievable!

Amazing!

OK, so you're not into special offers. Seen it all before. And besides, it's so much effort getting out that cheque book.

Fair enough, don't read any further and you won't ever know what you missed. I mean it's only a couple of free Ocean and Imagine games we're talking about here. A mere £17.90 worth of state-of-the-art software for nothing. Not worth a second look.

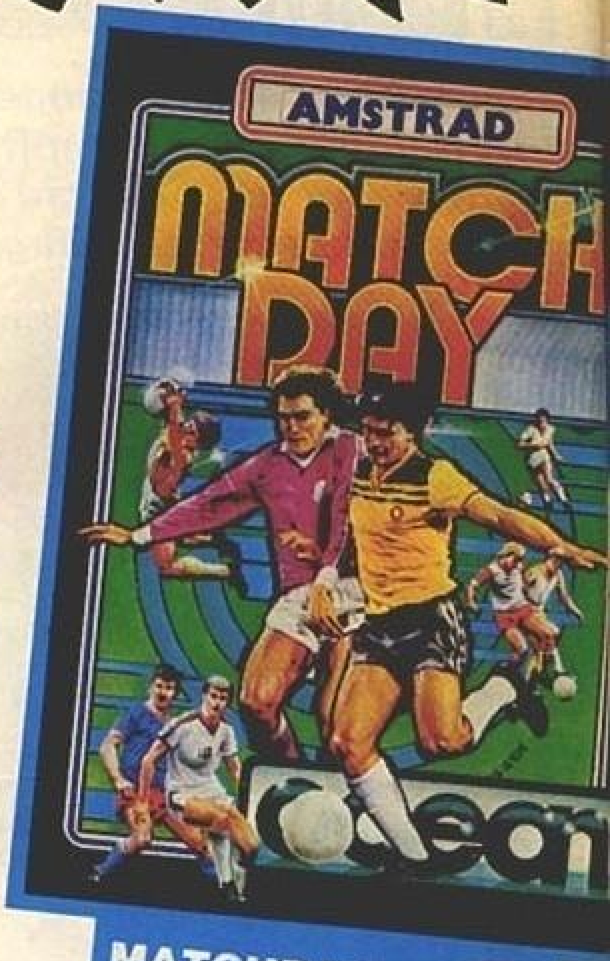
Well, just in case you are a teensy-weensy bit interested let me tell you some you some more. The thing is, we want you to subscribe to this magazine. It makes for a more permanent relationship. We don't lose sight of you just because some bone-headed newsagent didn't order enough stock one month. And you don't have to go trudging the streets in search of a copy, it just plops gently onto your doormat.

Very nice, of course, but wouldn't it be even nicer if you could also have a parcel plop onto the doormat containing two Ocean/Imagine games of your choice? A quick glance round this page should show you just how nice that would in fact be. Pretty nifty software, eh?

Well, that's exactly what will happen if you take out a 12-month subscription to Amstrad Action – two games of your choice, selected from the range on this page, will be sent to you completely free. Isn't it am-m-mazing?? They're actually worth more than the subscription!!

The kind-hearted (chainsaw-weilding) bosses who run this magazine swear blind to me that there's absolutely no catch. Just send us the completed form on this page together with your subscription fee of £15.50 (includes postage and packing) and we'll rush the games to you straightaway and make sure you receive, hot off the press, the next 12 issues of the most exciting, it says here, publication in the known universe. Yeah! Go for it!!

Blurb Writer *



MATCHDAY NEW!

I'm over the moon about this one, Brian. Great soccer action on your micro to celebrate the start of the season. You can play your team against the computer or another player. Features dribbling, passing, shooting, goalkeeper saves, etc, but no kissing.

Don't miss the Action!

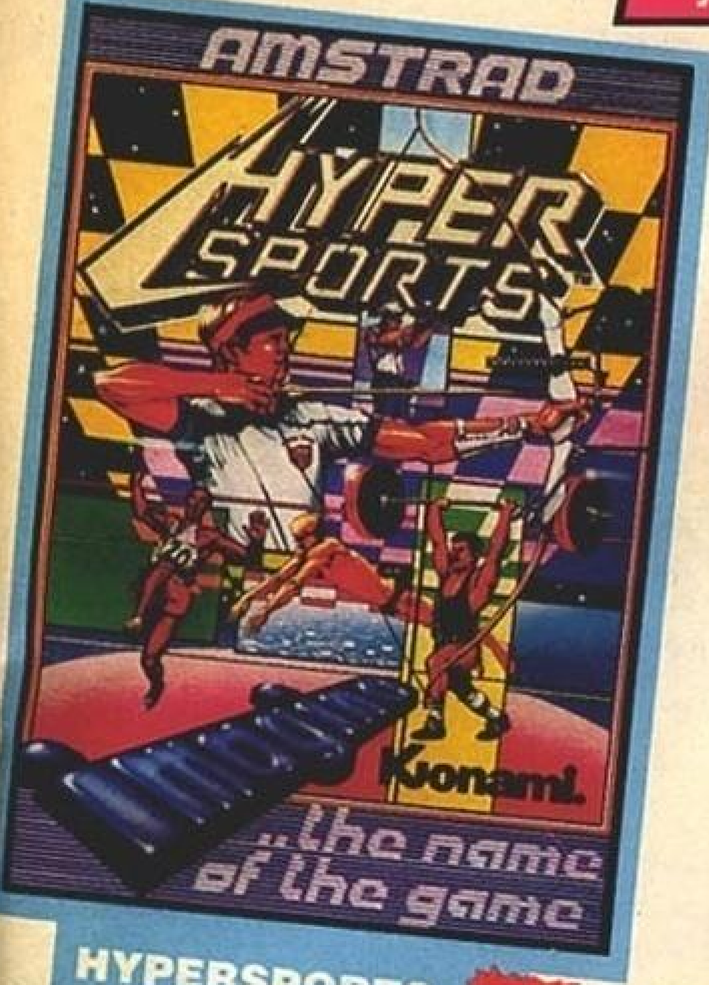
Who writes these headlines, anyway? I think the idea of this particular paragraph is to explain to you that Amstrad Action is such an amazing publication that you ought to be subscribing to it even without the extra inducement of those free games.

I'm supposed to point out things like that the reviews we print are completely unequalled, both because they're actually independent, and because they're just so detailed and punchy and informative and witty and so forth.

Also things like these special offers we keep doing which allow you to pick up software at u-n-b-e-l-i-e-v-a-b-l-e prices, Nigel. And the playing tips, and the adventure section and the features and the pretty little pictures and Toot and me and so on.

But the way I see it, why bother to point all this out to you when you can just look through the magazine and realise for yourself that we have just GOT to stick together over the next 12 months? Go on, let's

Your choice of software worth, gasp!, £17.90 when you subscribe to Amstrad Action

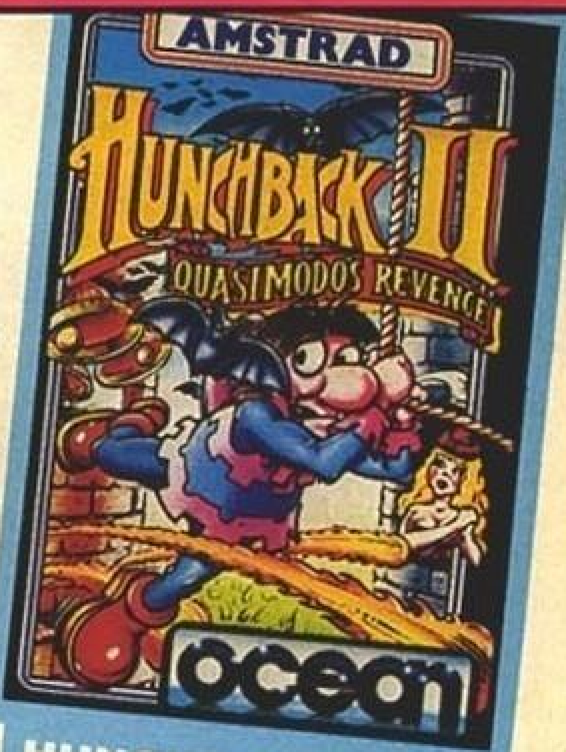


HYPERSPORTS

NEW!

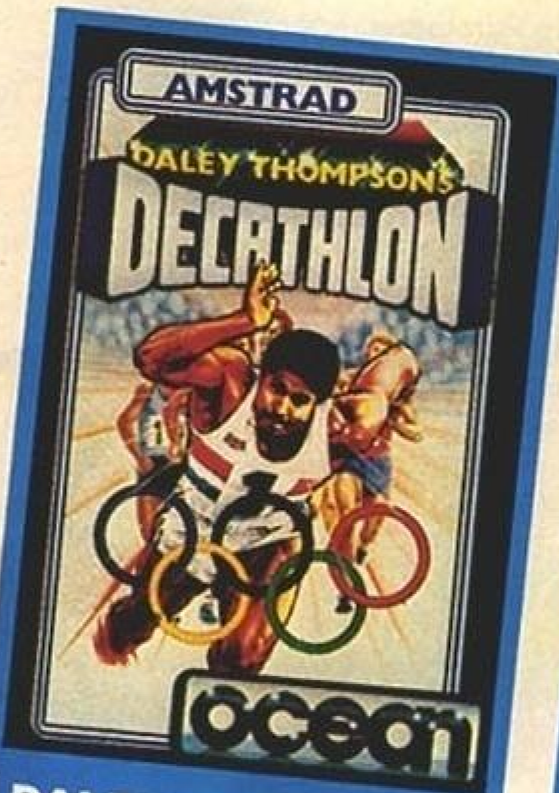
This is no less than the official, licensed version of the great Konami arcade smash *Track and Field 2*. Six skillful new events to master: weight-lifting, triple jump, clay-pigeon shooting, archery, swimming and gymnastics. At last you can turn yourself into a sporting hero without pumping your life-savings into a coin-op machine.

Choose any two of these games!



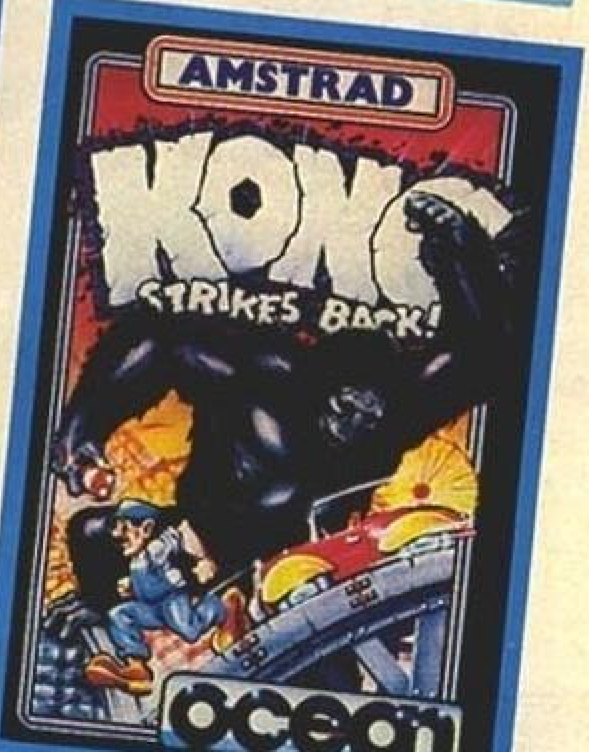
HUNCHBACK 2

This follow-up is about a hundred times better than the original Amsoft *Hunchback*. Four screens of extremely difficult, addictive action, pleasing graphics and some excellent music.



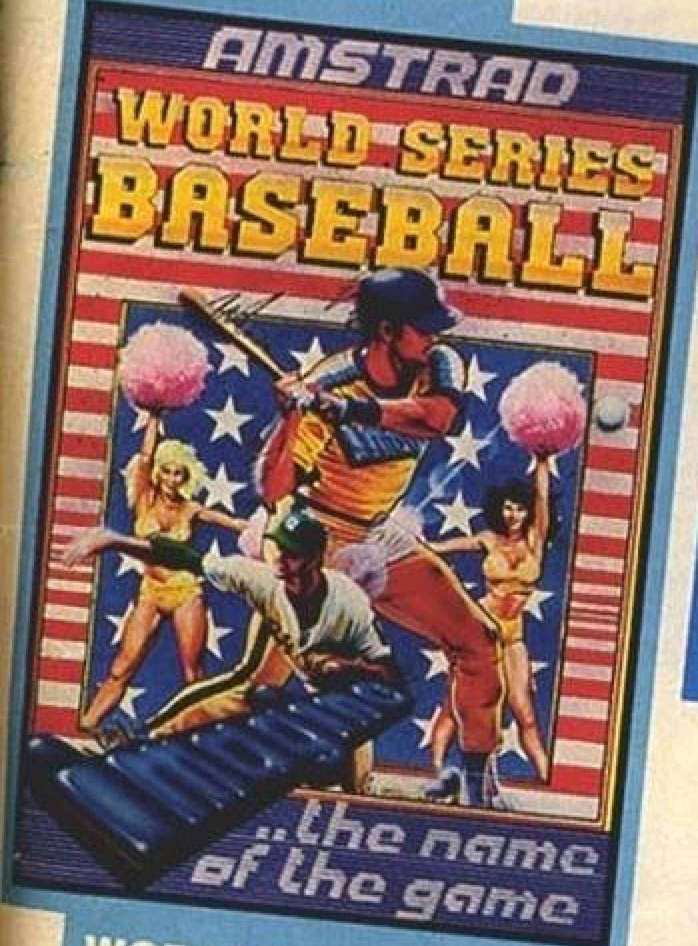
DALEY THOMPSON's DECATHLON

The Amstrad version of this top-selling Ocean title is far better than those on the Commodore 64 and Spectrum – excellent graphics and animation. Ten joystick-waggling events for you to power your way through in constant search of better times and longer distances. My arm's still aching.



KONG STRIKES BACK

Another arcade classic, this, as you have to make your way through twisted fairground machinery dodging cars, rocking horses and a fair few other things in your bid to rescue the beautiful maiden in the clutches of the gorilla. It's entertaining, it's addictive, and, as far as I'm concerned, it's impossible.



WORLD SERIES BASEBALL

NEW!

I hate to say it, but this Yankee sport makes for an excellent computer game. You have to learn the different skills of pitching, batting and fielding, not forgetting the jolly un-cricketing technique of stealing bases. Great fun either played against the computer or another player, especially if you're munching popcorn at the same time.

AMSTRAD ACTION SUBSCRIPTION FORM

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NEXT MONTH

▶ Xmas is coming

What do you give the computer that's got almost everything? We ask the CPCs themselves what they'd like to see in their Christmas stockings this Yuletide.

▶ AMX Mouse

We dissect the plug-in rodent that makes your Amstrad think it's Picasso. Worried about windows? Ignorant of icons? Don't worry – all will be revealed in this December Special.

▶ Action Test

The snappiest reviews of the snappiest software. There are some real corkers coming up, so leave a couple of days free to read Amstrad Action's guide to the good.

▶ Machine Code

Can't crack the Code? Finding it tricky to upgrade from Basic? Our bumper book review sorts out which text is best for the Machine Code beginner.

▶ Mega-map

A top-secret operation is taking place in the Maps and Special Ops room of AA. Yes, they're mapping out a monster game. What is it? You'll have to buy the mag to find out...

▶ Cheat Mode

Mini-maps, tips and pokes to get your gameplay boldly going where it's never gone before.

PLUS

- ▶ **ReAction** – your right of reply.
- ▶ **Adventures** – The Pilgrim looks at *Adrian Mole*
- ▶ **Mail Order** – get your games on the cheap.
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- ▶ **Serious Software** – we weigh up the heavy stuff.
- ▶ **Listing** – our first type-in prog.

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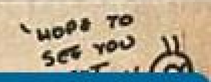
ADVERTISERS' INDEX

Activision	66, 91
Alligata	57
Anirog	44
Artic	72
Bubble Bus	35
Campbell	86
Cascade	35
Durell	56
Electric Studios	31
Firebird	45, 106
Gargoyle	51
Good Byte	80
Gremlin	63
Hisoft	
Honeysoft	80
Interlock	86
Imagine	2
Kuma	43
Load 'n' Run	86
Llamasoft	80
Melbourne House	58
Micronet	6
Microsimplex	26
Midland Computers	80
Mikrogen	94
Mirrorsoft	15
Ocean	71, back cover
Sapphire	29
Shekana	80
SJB Disks	35
Software Supplies	77
Ultimate	30
US Gold	4
Vortex	36



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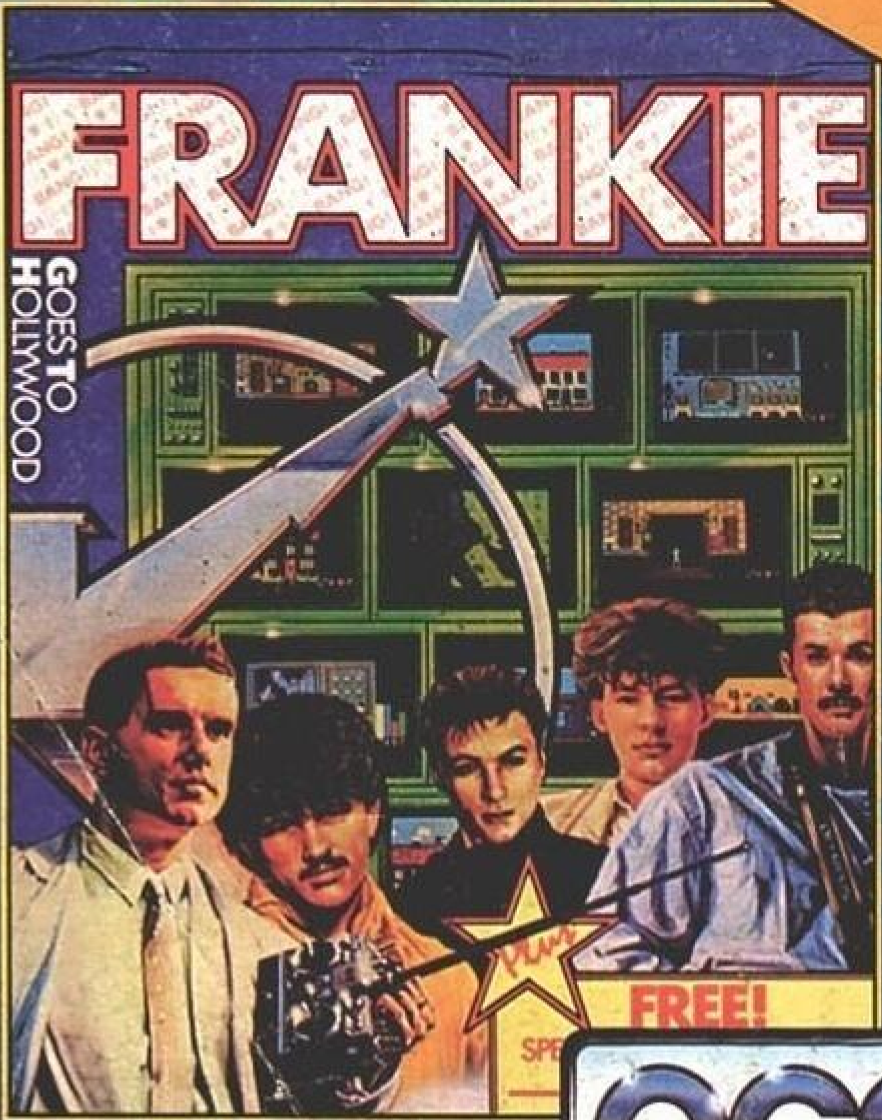
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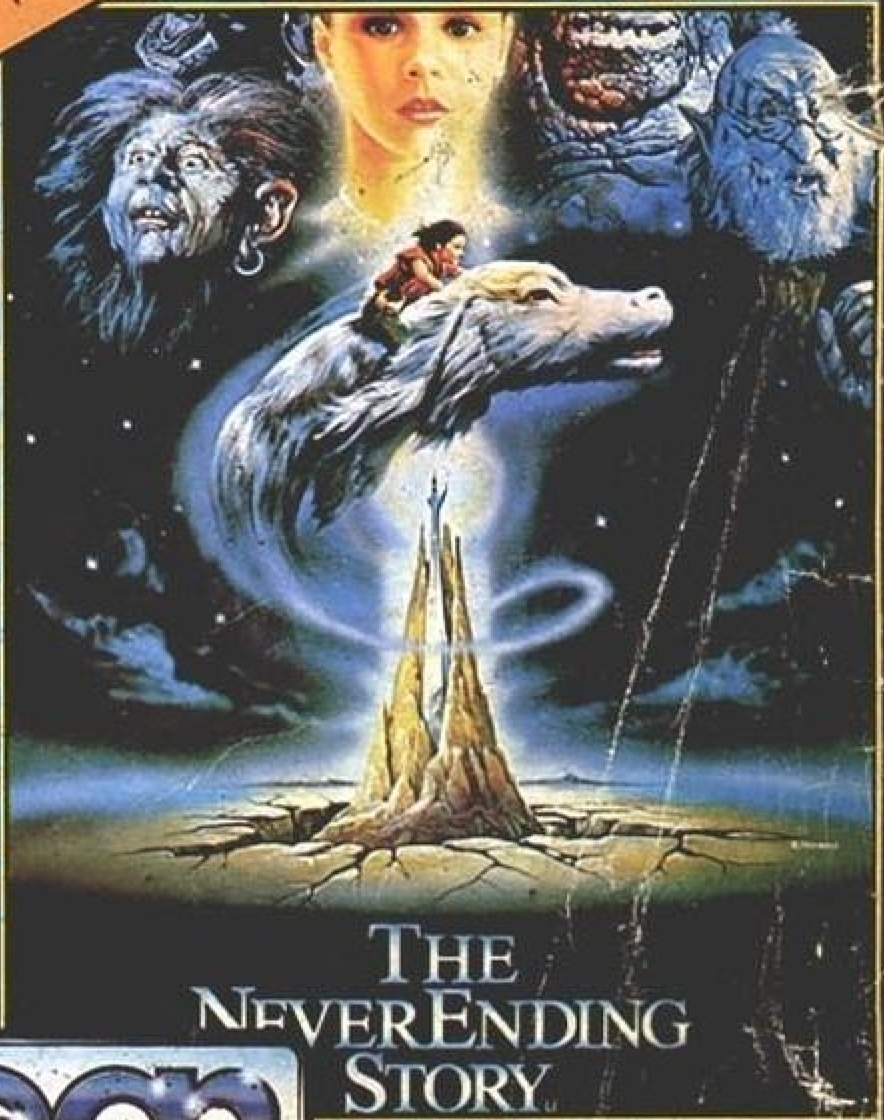
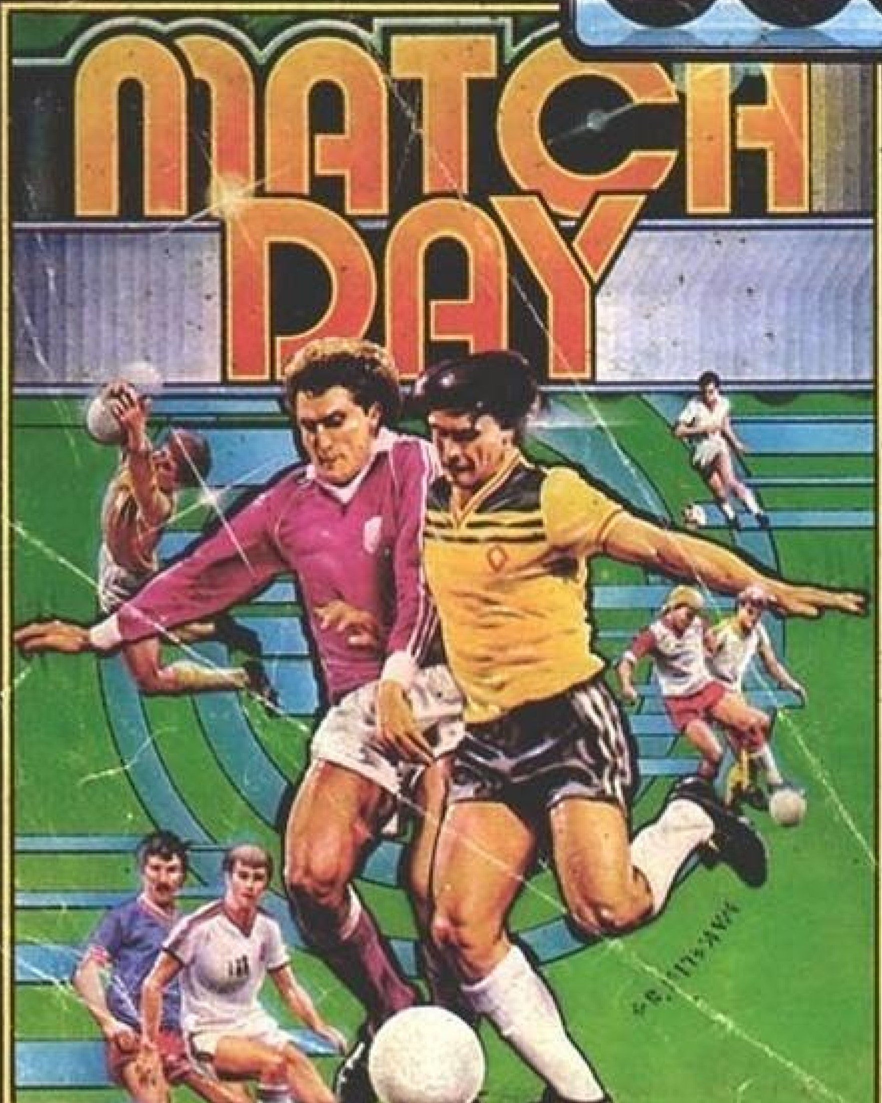
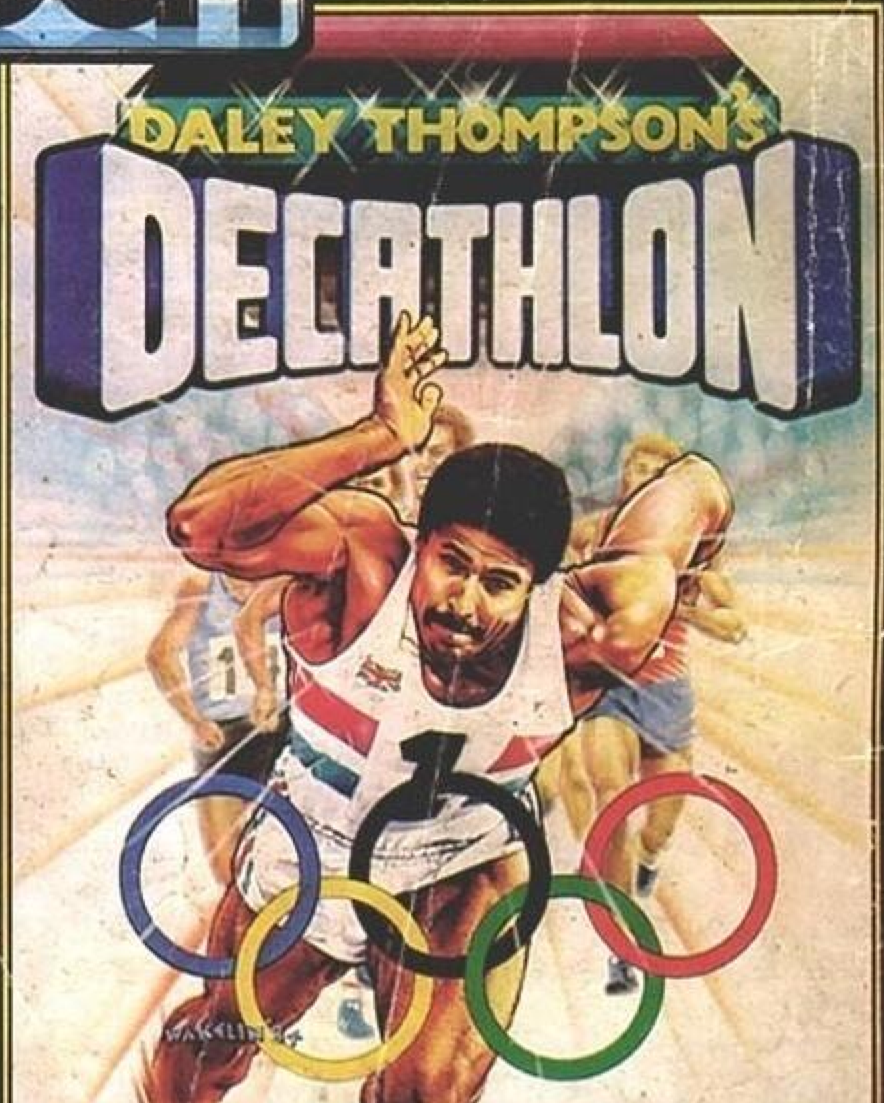

THE NEVERENDING STORY

ocean

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